THE POETIC YEAR

FOR 1916

A CRITICAL ANTHOLOGY

BY

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE

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A CRITICAL ANTHOLOGY

BY

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE

Author of "LYRICS OF LIFE AND LOVE," "THE HOUSE OF FALLING LEAVES," ETC.

Editor of "ANTHOLOGY OF MAGAZINE VERSE FOR 1914," "ANTHOLOGY OF MAGAZINE VERSE FOR 1915," "ANTHOLOGY OF MAGAZINE VERSE FOR 1916," "THE BOOK OF ELIZABETHAN VERSE," ETC.

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TO
PSYCHE AND CASSANDRA

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INTRODUCTION

WE DISCUSS THE POETRY OF ——

Need I say a word for the plan and substance of this book? One moment I think I ought, and the next that I ought not. But since the beginning is made, the end ought to be reached. It might be reached by simply saying — here's the book! Still, there's more than the book here, I think. There's an experiment — and that is always a dangerous thing in literature. Then, there's myself in the experiment, and this ego is an aggravation to some critics of American poetry. In every book, the ego is the dominant note — or else there would be no books, no literature, really no life. The world is a clash of egos — some as thin as air, others as solid as water. Both types are necessary — and the old world goes its way.

I suspect, some day, it will be said of me that "he was that ineffectual critic who beat his pen in the luminous void of appreciation." I should like nothing better, for an epitaph. The one worthwhile thing in life is to have a passion. If you have that, intuition is a surer guide to wisdom than philosophy. It may lead to destruction, but the path will be strewn with dreams, and dreams are the only seeds of human aspiration. If it arrives at the goal, which it very often does, the fabric of

success will be mostly woven with the gray threads of failure. Nothing is perfect but the will to do. We will to do from some divine and eternal impulse: that is our passion. What follows in action or method, is the attempt of our humanity, with its checks and limitations, to embody in the terms of the world the realities of the spirit. Thus life is all — and always — *a mystical venture.*

And the symbols of this mystical venture are more clearly defined in the art of poetry than in any other form of human expression. Art is not the end, but the means of this expression. Art changes, but the aims of art never do. The important thing in all this is not to engage the greater part of one's energies upon the means of art but upon the ends for which the art exists. It is a straight and narrow path to follow, because upon both sides of the way the walls of prestige and tradition restrict the discernment of new values. Contemporary achievement has always labored, and will always continue to labor, under the tyranny of the past. But it is not the tyranny of substance; it is the tyranny of form, which puts the present at a disadvantage with the past. Art is one, and the highest, form of the manifestation of the spirit of life. The spirit of life, whatever its mode or quality, never changes, but its manifestations do, and the art which embody those manifestations must be rendered in terms of contemporary experience.

Experience is what I have most tried to disen-

gage from the embodiments of a particular art, in this book. Let us suppose this experience is a kind of fabric — woven of dream, vision, imagination, observation, of physical and spiritual emotion — and ask if, being an abstraction, like spirit, the world has worn it threadbare, as we wear a garment on the body? Take the common experience of love: does it really differ more in spirit in the twentieth century than it did in the sixteenth? No; but the social environment having changed, men and women conform to it in their external, emotional relationships. And what I mean to insist upon is, that except for a few supreme recitals, the contemporary poet has an original substance to deal with, and can deal with it with all the intensity and passion, as any poet of the past. It is the function of the critic to acknowledge the achievement not with the tape-measure of rules and formulas, but as a personal discovery of the secrets and mysteries of life being expressed through art. If the art is not adequate, they will remain hidden. And this same point of view applies to the interpretation of every other human experience.

This is what I have tried to do in the following pages; how crudely sometimes, how successfully at others, I am well aware. What I have most tried to avoid, in any view expressed, is dogmatism. I have been absolute in my point of view time and again: but then I have merely held the position, and not attempted to advance it ruthlessly. I am perfectly willing to surrender the position to any

one who can take it on the same terms of *spiritual interpretation* — but they must be bold enough to attack me in front, and not from the rear.

The conversational scheme of the book may, or may not, interest some readers. Poetry is a human thing, and it is time for the world — and especially our part of the world — to regard it as belonging to the people. It sprang from the folk, and passed when culture began to flourish into the possession of a class. Now culture is passing from a class to the folk, and with it poetry is returning to its original possessors. It is in the spirit of these words that we discuss the poetry of the year. There are omissions from the year's publications, which I regret, and hope to make up if this work continues as a supplementary volume to the "Anthology of Magazine Verse." No inference of depreciation must be drawn because certain volumes are excluded from examination. Time and circumstances have had something to do with what may seem to many an arbitrary selection of titles.

W. S. B.

Cambridge, Massachusetts,
March 2, 1917.

THE POETIC YEAR FOR 1916

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I

MAGIC CASEMENTS

HAVE you been drunk with April weather? Then you know what it is to be rapturously intoxicated with the charming experience of listening to Psyche quoting from Bliss Carman's "April Airs":

> April now in morning clad
> Like a gleaming oread,
> With the south wind in her voice,
> Comes to bid the world rejoice.
>
> With the sunlight on her brow,
> Through her veil of silver showers,
> April o'er New England now
> Trails her robe of woodland flowers,—
>
> Violet and anemone;
> While along the misty sea,
> Pipe at lip, she seems to blow
> Haunting airs of long ago.

It was an inspiration for me, beyond the mere experience, because it brought to birth a resolution which became a joyous fact.

It was a happy accident that discovered and won for me the hospitality of Laurel Farm, resting there in the North with its western acres running down to the Merrimac River. It spreads eastward from the house by the high road, to the wooded hills covering eight or ten miles, to euphonious Derry with its famous academy and associations of our New England Theocritus, Robert Frost, nestling in the New Hampshire landscape. We entered the woods by the Derry Road, the only highway crossing eastward from the trolley line which runs from Nashua to Manchester, and on either side of this ascending and twisting pathway were thick woods of hemlocks, birches, poplars and pines, shading running streams and silent sombre pools. This main road, now lifting, then lying flat for a distance on the crest of a rise, and sometimes like an open current of brown sand bordered for stretches by low fields of bushes and innumerable varieties of wild flowers, ran in freakish windings to Derry. All along the way side-paths, which are sometimes scarcely more than secret footways, and at others the width of wheel-ruts over which lumbermen and farmers take short cuts, go twisting north and south, sloping and turning into the heart of the woods. Under the thick and tangled boughs of the trees the ground is rich with nature's carpeting of every design of moss and fern; the open spaces, naturally so, or due to the cutting of timber, or forest fires, are filled with every variety of wild flowers, and the thick, tangled, swampy hollows massed with moun-

tain laurel. A short distance up the Derry Road from the car line, is the neglected cemetery, on the crest of a hill, completely encircled by the woods.

Just beyond the cemetery, where the ground is level for a stretch, a branch road turns southeast from the main highway through the woods; the latter widens at this point, and on the left is a considerable clearing where the forest fire of last year bequeathed its heritage of charred tree trunks, standing desolate and ghostly against the shimmering and luxuriant colors of the woods beyond. On the south side of the road, a quarter of a mile behind the cemetery, is a pine grove, and in our fancy,— the fancy, I should say,— of Psyche who suggested it, we had a fairy belief that some New England Academus had set it there for our discussion of poetry.

There were four of us in the little group, and our common love for the art of poetry suggested a weekly meeting in the grove to discuss the books we had all agreed upon reading. "It is a good way," I remarked, "to examine the poetry of the year from different points of view, resulting in a sort of collective judgment. Out of the flood of books that pour from the press, we will select sixty or seventy volumes as representative. We will take a certain number a week: it might be two, three, four, five or six. I will see that copies of the books are distributed around not less than one week ahead of our meeting; sometimes two or three weeks will intervene for careful study." I

made up my mind to record these discussions, and the setting as well, with all those other touches of human character and mood which never fail to enliven and give color to the serious business of art and life. If this little book needs an apology, it is at least stated, in the foregoing sentence.

I gave fanciful names to my companions, Greek names which I am persuaded symbolized the spirit of each. There was nothing Psyche touched but made its soul apparent. Her wood-lore was beautiful and thorough; the very spirit of flowers, birds and trees was evoked when she went among them. Our other companion of her sex was Cassandra, and we gave her this name not because her forebodings were gloomy, but merely for her prophesying disposition, which was always building air-castles. If Psyche, as a very human individual, had a passion, she secreted it in her dreamy temperament, though from its hiding it sometimes burst with a force that quickly spent itself. She was an artist in paint and clay, who hid her talents as she hid her passions. Cassandra's passion was music, and her attitude towards life was in the terms of melody. Life surprised her most, I think, in its handling of faiths; Fate would sometimes pull her back from the extremities of devotion and confidence, leaving her a little dazed with disappointment. It was always a mystery to her that there might be two or three faces to the character of a person, and that the one she knew might not be the soul's true countenance. Where Psyche was wistfully wise

through intuition, Cassandra was winsomely ignorant through sympathy. The other member, besides myself, of our little group was Jason of the heroic dreams and adventuresome spirit, he who was always leading an argonaut of emotions to the Colchis of mystery in the hope of bringing back the golden fleece of beauty. We knew him to be all this beneath an exterior skeptical and sardonic.

He was restless in the bonds of a tranquillity that chafed the hidden spirit of his being. When the war broke with such fury over Europe he and his mother were on the high seas returning from Paris; his wish, I should say his passion, was, on landing at New York, to take the next steamer back to Europe and join the Foreign Legion. But his mother would not have it. He was all she had, and though she lived in New York during the winter with occasional weeks in Florida or California, and at various New England watering places, through the hot weather, when not abroad, he roamed about at all seasons and places. For a year he stood the pressure of his desire to offer his services to France, with an uneasy conscience as he remarked, for the sake of national pride and honor which he believed was humbled with the declaration of neutrality in the face of Belgium's rape, and then proposed to join a Harvard unit. He wrote his mother a pleading letter, but against her denial he could not act. I discovered him lolling about New England, pouring his wounded soul out in execrable war poems,

which he showed me in a moment of confidence, celebrating the cause of the Allies, praising the valor and spirit of France, and rebuking his own country for throwing away the greatest opportunity destiny had proffered her in safe-guarding and preserving the ideals of democracy. This was Jason, a kind of modern Jaques in spirit, wandering rudderless in a world of disrupted ideals, aching patiently beneath the reserve he presented to it, but loving his own dreams exquisitely, with his soul listening secretly for the mysterious call of adventure that never sounded. He loved poetry passionately, and knew it profoundly, and his greatest sorrow, at this particular time, next to not being allowed to fight for France, was his lack of ability to write good poetry.

"Isn't it perfectly delicious," observed Psyche, "to be here this glorious June day, with all the world of materialism shut out and all the world of spirit flowing in upon us? I used to wonder why it was that poets call the woods, so full of singing birds, the shrill and piping music of insects, a world of silence. Everything about is teeming with gay and ecstatic speech. I suppose it is the inner world of spirit, man's and nature's, that gives the outer senses that feeling of quietude."

The spell of silence, as Psyche remarked, was upon us, as we sat under the canopy of pines.

"It is really too satisfying to break," I hazarded, to test the interest in our program.

"'Charmed, magic casements opening on the

foam —' " Jason quoted. " You see Keats knew the value of silence which he framed in that phrase for the soul to look through upon wonder and mystery, two very active forces."

" Are we to believe that life and nature are dreams, fitted with magic casements, through which we look — that is our souls look — to see the meaning and mystery of things? " asked Psyche.

" Yes," I answered her. " And only poets know the secret of building such magical windows. But some have very special kind of window-panes for magnifying and clarifying the vistas of dreams. Don't you think our little group of poets chosen for discussion to-day have special virtues in magical craftsmanship? " I asked my companions.

" I think all of us will concede that," Jason spoke up, " though I will not concede that other virtues are always in entire harmony. In spite of opinion, I should say, that Miss Reese is quite the most perfect in harmonizing these virtues. Mr. de la Mare makes a good second, and I will grant you about Mr. Carman that he —"

" Satisfies my sense of magic," interrupted Cassandra, " because he makes truth felicitous, a habit some modern poets feign to scorn."

" I agree with Cassandra," I said; " but would like to stress the nature element which gives the spirit to that felicity."

" The spirit seems pretty worn in ' April Airs,' " Jason gave as his opinion. " For instance, this lyric on ' A New England June,' may

be delicate and elusive, but is it vivid with the sense of nature which Mr. Carman gave to a number of earlier lyrics?

> " *These things I remember*
> *Of New England June,*
> *Like a vivid day-dream*
> *In the azure noon,*
> *While one haunting figure*
> *Strays through every scene,*
> *Like the soul of beauty*
> *Through her lost demesne.*
>
> " Gardens full of roses
> And peonies a-blow
> In the dewy morning,
> Row on stately row,
> Spreading their gay patterns,
> Crimson, pied and cream,
> Like some gorgeous fresco
> Or an Eastern dream.
>
> " Nets of waving sunlight
> Falling through the trees;
> Fields of gold-white daisies
> Rippling in the breeze;
> Lazy lifting groundswells,
> Breaking green as jade
> On the lilac beaches,
> Where the shore-birds wade.
>
> " Orchards full of blossom,
> Where the bob-white calls
> And the honeysuckle

Climbs the old gray walls;
Groves of silver birches,
Beds of roadside fern,
In the stone-fenced pasture
At the river's turn.

" *Out of every picture*
Still she comes to me
With the morning freshness
Of the summer sea,—
A glory in her bearing,
A sea-light in her eyes,
As if she could not forget
The spell of Paradise.

" Thrushes in the deep woods,
With their golden themes,
Fluting like the choirs
At the birth of dreams.
Fireflies in the meadows
At the gate of Night,
With their fairy lanterns
Twinkling soft and bright.

" Ah, not in the roses,
Nor the azure noon,
Nor the thrushes' music,
Lies the soul of June.
It is something finer,
More unfading far,
Than the primrose evening
And the silver star;

" Something of the rapture
My beloved had,

When she made the morning
Radiant and glad,—
Something of her gracious
Ecstasy of mien,
That still haunts the twilight,
Loving though unseen.

" When the ghostly moonlight
Walks my garden ground,
Like a leisurely patrol
On his nightly round,
These things I remember
Of the long ago,
While the slumbrous roses
Neither care nor know.

It is all there but the vividness of touch which brightens such lines as these," — Jason went on quoting from memory:

" Between the roadside and the wood,
Between the dawning and the dew,
A tiny flower before the sun,
Ephemeral in time, I grew —

or,

" Your carmine flakes of bloom to-night
The fire of wintry sunsets hold;
Again in dreams you burn to light
A far Canadian garden old.

" The blue north summer over it
Is bland with long ethereal days;
The gleaming martins wheel and flit
Where breaks your sun down orient ways.

"There, when the gradual twilight falls,
Through quietude of dusk afar,
Hermit antiphonal hermit calls
From hills below the first pale star.

"Then in your passionate Love's foredoom
Once more your spirit stirs the air,
And you are lifted through the gloom
To warm the coils of her dark hair."

"You scarcely make out your case, Jason," I said. "The main thing is, that Mr. Carman, whatever you think of his infusion, has lost none of his magic. His muse came out of the North, bringing with it all of the romantic qualities which a northern imagination possesses. There the 'emerald twilights' are more lucid and transparent; April bugles with a rapture more intense, and a pain more exquisitely arousing, than the passionate maturing of southern climes. Hill, vale, meadow and sea are touched with a glamour and magic, at the heart of which is a wonder white and mysterious; something half elusive with symbolism, half declarative with the plain-song of innocent delight. The whole feeling is one of reticence and virginity in nature,— fresh, strong and vivid; to which the heart gives its confidence of dream and vision.

"This substance has a twofold significance. There is the exterior delight of the senses; pure, simple witchery of associated memories; the will playing upon the surface of experience, arrayed in all the illusions worn by the healthy instincts of

man. Interwoven with this delight of the senses is a natural symbolism, with its inexplicable and supernatural meanings. Bliss Carman's poetry from the beginning had the glamour of the one and the magic of the other. He gave to them a felicity of expression."

"What I like about Bliss Carman is not his flowers, but his bouquets," Jason countered. "He is a poet that does arrange his poems with some view to unity of effect."

"If we grant you that," Psyche addressed Jason, "does it dim his imaginative vision? Such a vision as Mr. Carman's does not dim with time. April has always been the symbol of the poet's dreams of life and nature. From the first to the last of his poetic utterance he has never lost his responsiveness to Nature's mystery and charm. Her enchantments have been perennial, and the secret of it, kept so profoundly wise all these years, is in these four lines from a poem in 'April Airs':

> "And then it came to me,
> That all that I had heard
> Was my own voice in the sea's voice
> And the wind's lonely word.

He finds, as these lines confess, his own voice in all the elemental things of the world, because his wisdom and aspiration are in compact with their mysteries. For this reason he is aboundingly ardent and youthful; and it is not a great question whether his mood is grave or gay; the felicity of knowledge and the lavish bestowal of sympathy,

makes his heart and soul familiar with the laws ordaining the secrets of nature."

"Take such a poem as 'A Mountain Gateway,'" I chimed in on the heels of Psyche's remarks. "Doesn't he give us in that poem a more habitable cabin for a poet's mind, than the unrealizable Innisfree of Yeats? His description and allurement of peace (in this beautiful poem), is the reward of the faithful trust which has kept his heart sweet and his mind wistfully confident through the rapid changes of later years."

"Yes," said Psyche, "hasn't he in that single line in 'A Mountain Gateway,' when he speaks of the 'unworn ritual of eternal things,' hasn't he, I repeat, stated poetry's final truth? It is what he heeds and hearkens to. Yet sometimes I seem to see him step aside a little wearily, in his beautiful and holy regard for the 'eternal things' to let the blatant note, and the stridency of the ultra-modern singer, take the road. It puzzles him a little, to see this motley figure in a hurried and arrogant progress trampling down his prophetic wayside flowers; disclaiming a fellowship and love that loses all of its mystery and beauty in the blindness and noise accompanying him. It hurts Mr. Carman most of all to see the spirit of culture gone out of this figure; the reverence for worth and age; the regard for delicate and exquisite courtesies; for in these things is the essence of his desire for truth and beauty."

"I daresay," interpolated Jason, "it was largely this 'motley figure,' as Psyche called it,

that filled the poet's mind when he refers to the 'poisonous weeds of artifice,' in the 'Phi Beta Kappa Poem, Harvard, 1914.' He has a particular harangue against the state of affairs it would give me a delight to quote because it might well suit a melancholy mood. Listen," and Jason in his fine voice, not untouched with a little scorn, recited:

"Defiling Nature at her sacred source;
And there the questing World-soul could not stay.
Onward must journey with the changing time,
To come to this uncouth rebellious age,
Where not an ancient creed nor courtesy
Is underided, and each demagogue
Cries some new nostrum for the cure of ills.
To-day the unreasoning iconoclast
Would scoff at science and abolish art,
To let untutored impulse rule the world.
Let learning perish, and the race returns
To that first anarchy from which we came,
When spirit moved upon the deep and laid
The primal chaos under cosmic law."

"But he does not leave the poem as a rebuke," Cassandra reminded Jason. "The poet has faith that sanity and balance will return; that the old verities will again possess the hearts of men. For does he not add, 'Have we not the key,'

"Whose first fine luminous use Plotinus gave,
Teaching that ecstasy must lead the man?
Three things, we see, men in this life require,
(As they are needed in the universe);

First of all spirit, energy, or love,
The soul and mainspring of created things;
Next wisdom, knowledge, culture, discipline,
To guide impetuous spirit to its goal;
And lastly strength, the sound apt instrument,
Adjusted and controlled to lawful needs.
The next world-teacher must be one whose word
Shall reaffirm the primacy of soul,
Hold scholarship in her high guiding place,
And recognize the body's equal right
To culture such as it has never known,
In power and beauty serving soul and mind.

'April Airs,' comes to us with this teaching, whether in a poem with its didactic appeal as these Phi Beta Kappa lines, or in some wistful lyric of field and wood."

"You are quite right, Psyche," I assented. "And in spite of his teaching the poet does not take us into the schoolroom of dry exhortations, but rather out into the open, where the lessons are from nature's own lips. He is bounteous with her beauties and delights, with her mysteries and magic of wind and flower, of roads and sky and stream; for among these, he bade us in a verse a long while ago, to

"Let loose the conquering toiler within thee;
Know the large rapture of deeds begun!
The joy of the hand that hews for beauty
Is the dearest solace beneath the sun."

"That would all be very well," commented Jason, "if the poet really showed more of 'the joy

of the hand that hews for beauty,' than I have been able to discover in these later poems of Mr. Carman's. Your true magician of casements, to my mind, is Miss Reese. You will wonder why I am of this opinion when Mr. de la Mare has a more elaborate recipe for spells. The reason, I can very easily state: Miss Reese is an unconscious transmitter, consequently simpler, and wholly under the influence of the angels. I do not deny that Mr. de la Mare very often experiences this same state of reliance upon pure imagination; but quite often he takes a metaphysical interest in his subject, stepping outside of his mood to watch the flow of substance into form."

"And Miss Reese——"

"Does nothing of the kind,"— Jason completed Cassandra's sentence to his own satisfaction. "She is always the heart of her song, a hidden force you never catch at work. She can tell you the secret better than I, and I am going to let her in this poem 'To a Town Poet':

"Snatch the departing mood;
Make yours its emptying reed, and pipe us still
Faith in the time, faith in our common blood,
Faith in the least of good;
Song cannot fail if these its spirit fill!

"What if your heritage be
The huddled trees along the smoky way;
At a streeet's end the stretch of lilac-sea;
The vendor, swart but free,
Crying his yellow wares across the haze?

"Your verse awaits you there;
For Love is Love though Latin swords be rust;
The keen Greek driven from gossiping mall and square;
And Care is still but Care
Though Homer and his seven towns are dust.

"Thus Beauty lasts, and lo!
Now Proserpine is barred from Enna's hills,
The flower she plucked yet makes an April show,
Sets some town sill a-glow,
And yours the Vision of the Daffodils.

"The Old-World folk knew not
More surge-like sounds than urban winters bring
Up from the wharves at dusk to every spot;
And no Sicilian plot
More fire than heaps our tulips in the spring.

"Strait is the road of Song,
And they that be the last are oft the first;
Fret not for fame; the years are kind though long;
You, in the teasing throng,
May take all time with one shrewd lyric burst.

"Be reverend and know
Ill shall not last, or waste the ploughèd land;
Or creeds sting timid souls; and naught at all,
Whatever else befall,
Can keep us from the hollow of God's hand.

"Let trick of words be past;
Strict with the thought, unfearful of the form,
So shall you find the way and hold it fast,
The world hear, at the last,
The horns of morning sound above the storm.

'Let trick of words be past,'" repeated Jason, —" that is what you sometimes feel that Mr. de la Mare fails to do. It is part of the heritage which a group of contemporary English poets have received from old Dr. Donne."

" For all that you say, Jason, Mr. de la Mare is a poet of magic," I insisted. " I fancy there will never come a time when I shall weary of quoting 'The Listeners':

"'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
'Is there anybody there?' he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,

While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head: —
'Tell them I came, and no one answered;
That I kept my word,' he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

That is the very stuff of magic, not in any single line or word, but by the total conjuration of something elemental, like an odor, a light, a feeling. Pierce the magic, if one dares, and I am willing to admit a bit of terror comes into view, haunting and overawing."

"No wonder the listeners did not answer this Traveller," Jason satirically remarked; "they were afraid to let him in to the 'shadowiness of the still house,' his house of childhood and youth; such an accommodation by Time would prove too eeyrie an experience for any man. I still maintain that the metaphysics of John Donne produces something else besides magic in our modern poet. The fact is, that Mr. de la Mare is a poet untroubled by time or circumstances. He is altogether too

acquiescent with life, with nature, with his own dreams."

"That isn't quite so," retorted Cassandra. "His acquiescence is only a trait, which permits him to listen for the secrets stealing shyly from the heart of the world. He knows what unhappy and futile powers sometimes go into their weaving."

"It is his almost acute perception of the impermanency of the world and its desires, that forces him to lure what loveliness he can out of the present impulse. Has he not inscribed it all in those beautiful lines 'An Epitaph'?

> "Here lies a most beautiful lady,
> Light of step and heart was she;
> I think she was the most beautiful lady
> That ever was in the West Country.
> But beauty vanishes; beauty passes;
> However rare — rare it be;
> And when I crumble, who will remember
> This lady of the West Country?"

Psyche, I noticed, had been silent, listening to our discussion. "Are you debating in your mind which of us is right?" I asked her.

"Why, not exactly," she answered. "I was merely asking myself how it was that both of you seem to miss what is most infectious in Mr. de la Mare's poetry."

"What is most infectious in Mr. de la Mare's poetry?" asked Jason.

"His humor, of course," she replied. "Here

is proof in one of the 'Three Queer Tales,' called 'Off the Ground' from 'Peacock Pie':

"Three jolly Farmers
Once bet a pound
Each dance the others would
Off the ground.
Out of their coats
They slipped right soon,
And neat and nicesome,
Put each his shoon.
One — Two — Three!
And away they go,
Not too fast,
And not too slow;
Out from the elm-tree's
Noonday shadow,
Into the sun
And across the meadow.
Past the schoolroom,
With knees well bent
Fingers a-flicking,
They dancing went.
Up sides and over,
And round and round,
They crossed click-clacking,
The Parish bound,
By Tupman's meadow
They did their mile,
Tee-to-tum
On a three-barred stile.
Then straight through Whipham,
Downhill to Week,
Footing it lightsome,
But not too quick,

Up fields to Watchet,
And on through Wye,
Till seven fine churches
They'd seen skip by —
Seven fine churches,
And five old mills,
Farms in the valley,
And sheep on the hills;
Old Man's Acre
And Dead Man's Pool
All left behind,
As they danced through Wool.
And Wool gone by,
Like tops that seem
To spin in sleep
They danced in dream:
Withy — Wellover —
Wassop — Wo —
Like an old clock
Their heels did go.
A league and a league
And a league they went,
And not one weary,
And not one spent.
And lo, and behold!
Past Willow-cum-Leigh
Stretched with its waters
The great green sea.
Says Farmer Bates,
'I puffs and I blows,
What's under the water,
Why, no man knows!'
Says Farmer Giles,
'My wind comes weak,
And a good man drownded

Is far to seek.'
But Farmer Turvey,
On twirling toes
Ups with his gaiters,
And in he goes:
Down where the mermaids
Pluck and play
On their twanging harps
In a sea-green day;
Down where the mermaids,
Finned and fair,
Sleek with their combs
Their yellow hair. . . .
Bates and Giles —
On the shingle sat,
Gazing at Turvey's
Floating hat.
But never a ripple
Nor bubble told
Where he was supping
Off plates of gold.
Never an echo
Rilled through the sea
Of the feasting and dancing
And minstrelsy.
They called — called — called:
Came no reply:
Nought but the ripples'
Sandy sigh.
Then glum and silent
They sat instead,
Vacantly brooding
On home and bed,
Till both together
Stood up and said:

'Us knows not, dreams not,
Where you be,
Turvey, unless
In the deep blue sea;
But axcusing silver —
And it comes most willing —
Here's us two paying
Our forty shilling;
For it's sartin sure, Turvey,
Safe and sound,
You danced us square, Turvey,
Off the ground!' "

We could not help but admit that Psyche had called our attention to a distinctive gift in Mr. de la Mare's poetry, though Jason merely to be perverse, I think, would not agree that it was more infectious than his other qualities.

"I'll like to see you 'axcusing silver,'" Psyche mocked Jason, as we prepared to return to The Farm.

"Well, it would be an adventure to have had Turvey's experience," laughed Jason, "with the shillings and the mermaids in the bargain."

II

THE RESEARCH ARTIFICE

"Our verse this week," began Psyche, as she comfortably seated herself on a fallen log with that swaying grace which is one of her attractive possessions, "is full of fine essences."

"All good poetry is chiefly essence, isn't it?" queried Jason.

"Yes; but you can't always qualify it," I suggested. "And that is why criticism so often falls back upon generalities in explaining its mood and substance."

"But the four volumes we selected for discussion this week," Psyche went on, "have each a special kind of poetic essence, though I don't think they all have the same agreeable taste."

"For instance," I prompted.

"Before Psyche gives her theory — or is it a theory?" Jason remarked "— of our four poets, I would like to ask, if so real a thing as poetry cannot be better characterized as a substance? I don't know, I merely ask."

"Let's have Psyche's view first," I proposed.

"They are simply impressions," Psyche informed me with a glance. "Well," she began, settling to the theme, "Mrs. Barker's 'Songs of a

Vagrom Angel' is the essence of a faith, which she has not wholly and fully proved. These songs, she declares in her Preface, were dictated to her in twenty-two hours of a March day. They came from, well — really from no particular state of existence, though angels, of course, have a particular abode in our mortal fancy. The songs sing of the soul in relation to this life we live on earth; and this suggests a quality of human spirit one likes to believe really exists in us. But I know of only one other modern poet, though I suppose I ought to count in Evelyn Underhill,— the Indian mystic Tagore, who actually lives and believes in such an abstract reality. For us, then, these fifty songs are a compound of essences. Now, in another sense, Mr. Buck's 'Ephemera' is also a volume of essences — the pagan efflorescence of a modern American whose soul is really, and only, alive in antiquity. He calls his pieces Greek prose poems; they are an exquisite pattern of gems. The glow, the warmth, the color, have each a piquancy that bite into the emotions. I should call, too, Mr. Evans pagan; through his volume 'Two Deaths in the Bronx,' he extracts his essence from modern life. His poetic solution will not always filter clear, however, for he strains the turgid emotionalism of a futuristic temperament. Futurism, cubism, or whatever you choose to call this ultra-modern æsthetic note, is nothing more to my mind than paganism reaching passionately back toward primitive chaos. Mr. Evans is primitive, or should I say primal? of the jungle and the

cave in the manner of communication, though his substance is modern to the extreme. Strangely enough, too," Psyche affirmed with a gesture, "Mr. Wright's 'One Way of Love,' is a volume of essences, fevers distilled, if you like, the strange mixture of the sensuous and ecclesiastical. His sensuous love-songs are ritualistic; his poems in which the influence of ecclesiasticism is evident, are physically emotional. In these he has fallen in love with the angel and is deaf to the message which the angel brings from heaven. Now, all these poets," Psyche summed up, "are not in touch with life as an actuality; as a simple, every day affair which men live, and wear as they do their clothes or their sorrows, but merely reflect it through the ground glass of dreams. We see on this side of the glass shadowy forms, and emotionally, shadows are always essences."

"We might expect Psyche," assented Jason, turning to me, "to seek the intangible in the form, but I do believe that she is right. You recall the twenty-first song in which Mrs. Barker's angel whispered its love of an invisible soul, out of a London sky on a certain day in the particular month of March."

"If we all could have an angel, like Mrs. Barker," I observed; "but I am afraid I am one of those skeptics she mentions in her preface, and rather credit her own splendid talents for the accomplishment of those twenty-two London hours."

"I think," said Cassandra, "that Jason did not refer to the appropriate poem from Mrs. Barker's

book for the proper understanding of the mystery of this angelic dictation. Read the opening song and it may throw some light on her peculiar privilege of developing this psychic intuition."

"I didn't," retorted Jason, "because it is arrogant to have your inspiration talk as reported in that poem, whether it is an angel or just yourself wishing to make a poem."

"Your irreverence is out of place," I rebuked Jason. "You can possibly countenance no angels except of your own acquaintance. I wonder if *you* could find one as accommodating as Mrs. Barker's?"

"Oh, I prefer shepherds," Jason replied sarcastically. "When it comes to vagueness they beat angels hollow. Between the two in modern literature there really seems to be no choice for — well, let us say, reality. That is why I would match Mr. Buck's shepherds against Mrs. Barker's angels any day. You have heard an angel speak, in divine — no, rather psychic — accents; now listen to a shepherd in any accent you please, but don't charge the timbre to a modern Philadelphian:

"When it is night, before the moon has risen and the skies are spattered thick with stars; when, in the distance, all things blend into one and the sleeping earth touches the arched sky, I stand before my tiny hut and pray.

"Below me on the hillside, their coats glowing softly in the starlight, lie my sheep. And from the

trees, the brooks, the grasses, the incessant chorus of midsummer nights trills through the air.

" Yet I know not to what or to whom I pray. Not to the sun or moon for they are nowhere to be seen; not to the gods for there is no temple nor even a statue here; not to the stars for there are too many and some, neglected, would be jealous.

" Perhaps it is to the sighing wind I pray; perhaps to the shadows and the rolling hills; perhaps to the night itself, itself which seems so peaceful, all-embracing, mysteriously divine."

Cassandra offered a suggestion about the modern interpreter of Greek emotion that was worth attention in spite of its obviousness. " Your modern singer of Greek themes," she said, " is likely to be a bit sensual. Scarcely any poet in English had, like Keats, the impersonality to escape it. It will always remain a mystery how the London cockney, as one of his early critics called him, became so authentic a Greek. I imagine Matthew Arnold, after ' The Strayed Reveller,' gave up the attempt in despair; ' Empedocles on Etna,' was of Landorian mode rather than of true Greek substance. Swinburne made of his intellectual Greek sympathies a sort of Renaissance confusion. But your modern poet without these sympathies, is sensual. Of course, he doesn't mean to be. He aims to be merely faithful to the Greek view of life, and that is to give a frank expression of experience. If you wish to be convinced of the difference, read the idyls of Theocritus, especially I would recommend the twenty-seventh idyl."

"You should discriminate," broke in Jason. "between the bucolic poets and the broad field of Greek poets. Your argument might not prove so persuasive."

"I see that you, for all your contact with life," Cassandra addressed Jason in reply, "cling to the fallacy that the city is more moral than the country. I don't think the rural community of the first century differed much in this respect from the twentieth. So I maintain that this bucolic poet Theocritus, telling frankly the pastoral life of his day, presented it with a wholesomeness our poets miss when they copy the mood. In such poems as 'Penumbra' and 'Astarte,' Mr. Buck comes off very well, I'll admit, with his task."

"Oh, that's a rather pale approval of Mr. Buck's talents," I charged Cassandra. "Surely no American poet has struck this particular note better than Mr. Buck has in 'The Merchant.' Give it the honor of your attention:

"These treasures I have gathered for many years. And if thou wilt . . . Here are mirrors of bronze; and here a silver bracelet, heavy with sards from Lydia. It is enchanted, caressing the arm of her that wears it, if only she be fair . . . Thou seest!

"Here are perfumes and rare essences in alabaster vials from Corinth and the isle of Crete. And here, perfumes no less immortal in brown clay vases from Etruria.

"This rose powder from the amorous blooms of Mitylene will make thy nails lustrous as nacre. And

here is purest kohl to shadow the flaming languor of thine eyes.

" These glowing silks have come from many lands. This is thy color . . . O Isis! How beautiful! . . . The price? Nay, take it, and the bracelet also. They would desolate, away from thee. And as my only payment, I pray thee wear them once, passing my door."

" I'll not deny you the comfort of your opinion of Mr. Buck's poem," Jason exclaimed with an excessive gesture of politeness; it was a way he sometimes had of dismissing a subject about which he was not in entire agreement with the speaker, and desired to introduce a fresh one. We really can't leave Mr. Evans," he added, " without an auditory acquaintance with his art, and I propose to give you that pleasure by reading the first poem in ' For the Haunting of Mauna,' which is about the ' Body of the Queen.' You will observe that it is made out of such — well, Shakespeare would have said dreams — stuff as headaches are made out of, and that's no reflection upon the appetite of desire, I can most humbly assure you. The thing haunts me like a visitation I had, or believed I had, when a child, on Christmas eve of an ass's head crowned with flowers in a nimbus of light, projected over my bed in the dark. Here is the poem:

" Suave body of the Queen, she gave me you,
Misting in still, warm rains of tenderness —
But kept herself, and we are each betrayed.
You are her mistress, and she makes of me

Another mistress! Playthings are we both,
When we thought she meant us for full sovereignty;
It was not regal, and her throne is stained.
She bade you seek me, and your singing feet
Ran quickly, surely; you held out your hands.
You had no fear because you felt my heart
Leap as you laid your white breast under it.
We had no prides to conquer as we kissed,
For we knew kinship in our overthrow.
Yet now she stands apart and questions us.
How can she question — leave me out of it —
But you, her body, her sweet source of joy,—
How can she then divide herself from you,
And calmly reckon what the gain may be?
The hour will come when she will tire of us,
And all your softness will be broken up,
Your rioting lips chilled with an ashen wind.
There is a hint of vileness in the air,
And on the strings a dance of ironies,
With love's scarecrow jigging wearily. . . .
So still I have you — so I am not afraid!"

"Well," commented Cassandra, when Jason finished, "the exotic mood seems to have taken hold of the poet's conception. But I suppose, whether of the spirit or the flesh, the exotic may be, according to Psyche's opinion, merely an essence."

III

THE SACERDOTAL WONDER OF LIFE

We lingered in the house waiting for the clouds to break, but they hung on with a persistency that threatened our ardor. I had brought a friend, a poet from the West, up to the Farm, and I particularly wanted him to see our woods; nor did I want my friends to miss the reading he promised, under the leafy boughs, of the delicate, suggestive hokku poems he had written. Psyche was for dashing out, with no mind for the weather, and her enthusiasm prevailed upon us to start. She knew a canopied grove, she said, near the edge of a deep brook, and even if the rain came down heavily, the boughs would protect us there. It was not far from the place we were accustomed to meet. So with wraps and umbrellas, we went out to defy a showery June sky. In David's leather case, we put our books; besides his manuscript and our weekly group of poets, I took along Robinson's poems which I was to read for David O'Neil's pleasure late in the afternoon.

The rain held off during our walk to the grove. Psyche's brook ran through a deep ravine; it was a still and sombre place, far away from the high road that ran to Derry. The woodland floor

there, was carpeted thick with pine needles and moss. We found a comfortable and sheltered spot, under a huge pine standing so close to its fellows that its lower branches made a perfect ceiling. Here we spread raincoats and sweaters, and seated ourselves, undisturbed by the rain which began to patter lightly above our heads.

"Psyche on the last occasion of our visit to the woods," I began, "gave us a little explanation of essence in poetry. I suppose everything has an essence, everything that is of the spirit and beautiful. But the particular significance of her remarks, was in showing how four poets such as Elsa Barker, Mitchell Buck, Cuthbert Wright, and Donald Evans, could extract it from the same source of temperament, and yet present such a totally different sense of experience. Jason, here, preferred to regard this mystery as a substance; something too vital to be an abstraction. And Cassandra, questioning the term, came up at the end with a rather flat assumption that the moods of all these poets were exotic."

"Oh, I protest that interpretation," Cassandra put in. "Essences are rare, and I only meant, that where life is so solid as it is with us to-day, any attempt to get so far away from it as those poets do, is to express the strange and unfamiliar. Whether it is the embodiment of angels through the psychic experience of a woman's soul, as in Mrs. Barker's songs; or fauns and shepherds of ancient Greece taking shape in Mr. Buck's

imagination, as in his pastels, the impulse, I insist, is exotic."

"Wasn't life just as solid for the Sicilian shepherd two thousand years ago — more solid, I imagine, than we can guess, when there came to his passionate mind echoes of the Palestine tragedy, tumbling his gods in confusion from their altars, and setting up this new god, a man like himself, only pale where he was rosy of countenance, and with no humor in his nature — wasn't life just as solid then," repeated Jason, "as it is with us now? And may it not be just as solid for the angels, even though they live on light, music and prayers, as some of us do who have bad digestions — in the abodes where they are? Well, then, why shouldn't these poets treat distance and time as of no consequence in searching for their own particular kind of beauty and meaning of truth?"

"There is something in what Jason says," I approved.

"*Something!* in what I say!" Jason threw at me, in a tone of contempt. "Well, you don't seem to have found it, if that is all you can say," he added.

I laughed heartily at the pain Jason pretended to suffer from my obtuse remark. "Here, Jason," I said, "is my tender of conciliation, this sonnet of Masefield," and I read:

"Go, spend your penny, Beauty, when you will,
In the grave's darkness let the stamp be lost.
The water still will bubble from the hill,
And April quick the meadows with her ghost;

Over the grass the daffodils will shiver,
The primroses with their pale beauty abound,
The blackbird be a lover and make quiver
With his glad singing the great soul of the ground;
So that if the body rot, it will not matter;
Up in the earth the great game will go on,
The coming of Spring and the running of the water,
And the young things glad of the womb's darkness gone;
And the joy we felt will be a part of the glory
In the lover's kiss that makes the old couple's story.

You will discover, expressed in this sonnet, how I feel about what you said, Jason. 'Go, spend your penny, Beauty, when you will,' it is the 'lover's kiss' of humanity, and chronicles the 'old couple's story,' age after age. It is the sacerdotal wonder of life which poets feel, and it need not be just the particular period of life into which the poet is born. More certainly than other men poets are conscious of pre-existence, in other worlds, and in this too, and into their poems they bring often the temper of another age. Your 'belated Elizabethan,' is an example."

"Your theory is all nonsense," Jason scoffed. "But I do appreciate your discernment of Masefield's genius. I say 'genius' advisedly, for whatever was claimed for his earlier narratives, sea-ballads and poems, they never gave him the right to wear that term as these sonnets do. . . ."

"Yet some profess to see a decline of his powers in the sonnets," I observed, "from the vigorous and picturesque realism of the narratives. The

reverence for life, the quest for beauty, in them is the finest expression of this poet's life."

"My testimony to that assertion," said Psyche, "is this one with its mystic illumination," and she read:

"Flesh, I have knocked at many a dusty door,
Gone down full many a windy midnight lane,
Probed in old walls and felt along the floor,
Pressed in blind hope the lighted window-pane.
But useless all, though sometimes, when the moon
Was full in heaven and the sea was full,
Along my body's alleys came a tune
Played in the tavern by the Beautiful.
Then for an instant I have felt at point
To find and seize her, whosoe'er she be,
Whether some saint whose glory does anoint
Those whom she loves, or but a part of me,
Or something that the things not understood
Make for their uses out of flesh and blood."

"I come back," declared Jason, "to Psyche's theory of essences. The 'mystic illumination,' of the sonnet — it is her phrase — is a kind of essence, too. The mood is a little too abstract, however, to give it a name. Nevertheless, whether we agree or disagree about this intangible quality in poetry, there's precious little of it come to the surface in the poetry of Mr. O'Conor, or Mrs. Aldis."

"Don't you include," asked Psyche, "Mr. O'Conor's play, 'The Fairy Bride,' in this elemental class of verse? There are ideals and fairies and disembodiments in it; and, having these, like

all things of the Celtic imagination, aren't they the essences of dreams?"

"One would almost accept your point of view," replied Jason, "when one reads this dialogue from 'The Fairy Bride,' in which Dermot the prince says to Ethne, the fairy princess, as he leaves her, being healed, to go back to Dun Faithoi and the inheritance of his father's kingdom: 'Time has been short indeed; but I have gained strength of body and soul. Both thou gavest me: the one with thy potions and thy healing hands, the other thy love; and I would go, as every man must wish to go, and show the strength of this, thy love, to all the world.' And Ethne replies:

"'That which it may not understand, why show
The world, when here we know the worth of love?'

And when you consider the wicked queen, Buan, in league with evil powers and dark spells, which she uses against the loyalty of the druids and nobles, in behalf of her son Connla whom she is ambitious to have succeed Fergus on the throne, I almost grant that Mr. O'Conor, too, belongs to Psyche's poetry of abstraction. Only I think his symbolism has a body to it, though it may be of vague substance."

"The very unreality of the play," Psyche claimed, "is the most real part of it. And strange as it may seem, the fairy bride is the most living character in the play. Fergus and his queen, Buan, are vivid — well, if one may say so, like shadows on a bright surface. Of course, in com-

mon with all fairy tales, the play has its moral, but it is not a pendant as it should be, owing, I suppose, to the American influence upon the poet's Celtic spirit. Take the scene, at the end, when Buan having failed, and in humiliation and anger is led away by the nobles, and the happy plighting of Dermot and Ethne follows, doesn't the poet voice a wisdom which is the most elusive in the world?

"ETHNE. Now, justice done, I will complete my story.
On the happy meadows was Prince Dermot healed,
And there I won his love; yet could not win
His promise to remain with me forever.
The mortal call of duty sounded still
Upon his ears; he had not learned that Love
Is all, and Love and Duty one in Fairyland.

"KING. Well has thou proved thy father's trust, O Dermot!

"ETHNE. Then, since he would return, my bugle horn
I gave him; bade him in his direst need
Blow thrice thereon. Straightway would I appear.
My father granted then his suit: consent
To come again to Fairyland and wed
With me; yet charged him he should touch no wine
Before the sun was set upon the day
That saw him in thine hall once more; to tell
No mortal of his healing, under pain
Of coming nevermore to Fairyland.

"DERMOT. But I have tasted wine, and so am doomed.

"ETHNE. Peace to thy fears, Belovèd; for the King,
My father, in his wisdom judged not thus.
The spirit of thy promise thou hast kept,
Broken the letter only. I am come,
A mortal woman, here to wed with thee,
Bearing my father's blessing. Fairy nature
Is mine no more. Because thou hast touch'd wine,
Never mayest thou return to Fairyland;
But I will stay henceforward in the world,
And by our love shall we be made immortal!

"DERMOT [*Embracing Ethne*]. By such love am I made immortal now! We shall reign together through the years; and, at the end, pass in the fullness of our time to the meadows we once have known; there live and love forever.

"KING. O Ethne, a hundred thousand thanks were not enough for all that thou hast done! I am forever grateful to the Fairies, the unseen spirits who live to favor mortal men. I welcome thee and Dermot, giving him my throne, and to ye both my blessing. O nobles, choose now whom ye will have to reign!

"NOBLES: [*with one voice*]. We choose Prince Dermot!"

"The moral influence cannot any more be said to be a stigmata on American art," Cassandra broke in on the heels of Psyche's reading. "Mrs.

Aldis's 'Flashlights,' is a very fine book in every way, and proves that life and art may become acquainted on equal terms without an ethical or moral introduction. This poet presents life nakedly, takes no sides with this or that condition, holds no brief for this or that purpose; expressing only the pity and glory of it. She gives one, too, a sense of security in the free forms that are used, a conviction one does not feel regarding many of the 'new' poets."

"Well, I see a very strong moral influence in Mrs. Aldis's poem 'The Barber Shop,'" Jason wished to correct Cassandra. "I daresay Mrs. Aldis had no notion of exerting any such influence. What she desired to show, I suppose, was that such a girl as that manicurist was simply human, and clean about it, a fact the stupid old world of pious people won't accept. But it isn't in that direction the poem drives home most sharply; it is in the test of the man. A man needn't have a grandfather and four uncles 'elders in the Sixth Presbyterian Church,' to make him behave decently. I admire that chap for acknowledging his weakness by running away from temptation, but I despise the weakness in human nature that must regard such a frank and honest confession as a temptation. Let me read these appealing lines:

"I spend my life in a warren of worried men.
In and out and to and fro
And up and down in electric elevators
That rush about and speak each other,
Hurrying on to finish the deal,

Hurrying home to wash and eat and sleep,
Hurrying to love a little maybe
Between the dark and dawn
Or cuddle a tired child,
Who blinks to see his father.

"I hurry too but with a sense
That Life is hurrying faster
And will catch up with me.

"Right in the middle of our furious activity
Two soft-voiced barbers in a little room,
White-tiled and fresh and smelling deliciously,
Flourish their glittering tools,
And smile and barb,
And talk about the war and stocks and the Honolulu earthquake
With equal impartiality.

"I like to go there.
Time seems slow and patient
While they tuck me up in white
And hover over me.
The room gives north and west and the sunset sky
Lights the grey river to a ribbon of glory,
Where silhouetted tugs,
Like tooting beetles fuss about their smoky businesses;

"Besides, in that high place
No curious passer-by
Can see my ignominious bald spot treated with a tonic,
Nor can a lady stop and bow to me, my chin in lather,
As happened once;

So I go there often
And even take a book.

" There's another person all in white
Who comes and goes and manicures your nails
On application.
One can read with one hand while she does the other.
Because I feel that Life is hurrying me along
With horrid haste
Soon to desert me utterly,
I used to take my Inferno in my pocket
And reflect on what might happen
Were I among the usurers.

" One day a low-pitched voice broke in.
I listened vaguely,
What was the woman saying?
' Please listen for a moment, Mister Brown,
I've done your nails for almost half a year;
You've never looked at me.'
I looked at that,
And sure enough the girl was young, and round and sweet.
She coloured as I turned to her,
And looked away.
I waited silently, enjoying her confusion.
The words had been shot out at me
And now apparently she wished them back.
' What do you want? ' I said.
Again a silence while she rubbed away.
I opened my Inferno with an ironic glance
Towards Paradiso waiting just beyond.
' Well, rub away, my girl,' I thought,
' You opened up, go on.'

" The book provoked her.
' I'm straight,' she said.
' I never talked like this before.
The fellows that come round —
Good Lord!
Showin' me two pink ticket corners
Stickin' out the pocket of their vest,
" Say, kid — tonight,— you know,"
Thinkin' I'll tumble
For a ticket to a show!
They make me sick, they do,
Boobs like that;
You're different. I want to know
What's in that book you read.
I want to hear you talk.
Oh, Mister, I'm so lonesome!
But I'm straight, I tell you.
I read, too, every evening in my room,
But I can't ever find
The books you have.
I expect you think I'm horrid
To talk like this — but —
I got some things by an Englishman
From the Public Library.
Say, they were queer!
He thinks a woman has a right
To say out if she likes a man;
He thinks they do the looking
Because they want —
Oh, Mister, I'm so terribly ashamed
I'll die when I get home,
An' yet I had to speak —
I'd be awful, awful good to you, if only,
Please, please, don't think I'm like —

Don't think I'm one o' them!
Whatever you say, don't, don't think that!'

"She stopped, and turned to hide her crying.
I looked at her again,
Looked at her young wet eyes,
At her abashed, bent head,
Looked at her sweet, deft hands
Busy with mine . . .

"But —
Not for nothing
Were my grandfather and four of my uncles
Elders in the Sixth Presbyterian Church,
Situated on the Avenue.
Oh not for nothing
Was I led
To squirm on those green rep seats
One day in seven.

And now,
The white-tiled, sweetly-smelling barber shop
Is lost to me.
What a pity!"

"Mrs. Aldis's art is a whole-hearted expression of life," Cassandra began when Jason had finished. "Among the lowly, the outcasts, her muse goes visiting. But everywhere it goes with the soft step of pity and sympathy; best of all with understanding. Poems like 'Converse,' 'Window-Wishing,' 'The Sisters,' and all the 'Seven Stories in Metre,' are very fine. I think the latter are quite

as good in their way as Wilfred W. Gibson's tales in 'Fires' and 'Womenkind.' Why such things as 'The Park Bench,' 'Ellie,' 'The Prisoner,' and —" Cassandra was waxing in her enthusiasm, when Jason interrupted with a touch of irony: —

"And — the incomparable and poignant realism of modern life in its common aspects, shows that American poetry——" here he paused, glancing at me with the air of one who acknowledges but refuses wholly to subscribe to another's faith.

"Yes, yes; go on," I urged; "you are at least approaching the right shrine. Perhaps, you will pray a bit before leaving, when you realize it has performed, and can still perform, miracles. Here is David from the West, a living testament of the new age, whose poems you shall hear to prove it. It's a kind of miracle, this tender, wistful beauty," and I read these lines from memory:

> "O, Mocking Bird,
> Sing your love song to me,
> But never let me know
> The words you use in your singing,
> For my moods need ever new words
> And you have only a few."

"And I came all the way to these New Hampshire woods to learn that," laughed David. "What will my friend Billy Reedy say?"

"And doesn't Mrs. Aldis, in the lyrical mood of 'Brown Sands,'" I added, "give us a similar feeling of a genuine poetic spirit?

"My stallion impatiently
Stamps at my side,
Into the desert far
We two shall ride.

"Brown sands around us fly,
Winds whistle free,
The desert is sharing
Gladness with me.

"The madness of motion
Is mine again.
Forgotten forever
Sorrow and pain.

"Into the desert far
Swiftly we flee,
Knowing the passionate
Joy of the free."

When I finished, Psyche said: "Is it our Puritanism, Mr. O'Neil, which makes us unsympathetic with life close at hand, and very passionate in our feeling for misery half a world away?"

IV

THE CHANT OF ARMAGEDDON

We were not exactly out of tune with the surroundings of our little grove, for there surged through it a spirit too beautiful not to bring us up to an emotional obligation of what we owed to Nature in her ripest and most bounteous mood; but even here the echoes and sufferings of a world at war penetrated; and for a while we just sat with a sad consciousness, as if the anguish of Europe was as real to us as it must be to the civil population in the northern provinces of France, in Flanders, Poland and Serbia.

I do not think there was one of us who believed in war, not Jason even, though had the maternal consent been given he would at the very moment have been in Picardy instead of spending the summer afternoon with three agreeable companions, in the cool fragrance of pine woods expressing his soul about poetry. Two of our party hated war vehemently, and Psyche and Cassandra, in doing so, but gave voice to the almost universal feeling which the women of the world have towards this most cruel and destructive of all wars. Jason and myself accepted this war as a necessary evil. Since it had come, and was bound to come as the

re-reading of events in European diplomacy during the past fifteen years has shown, we realized that the only course was to fight it out to its end. That end, as our judgment and our hopes promised, was the absolute and final triumph of the Entente Allies. But Psyche and Cassandra could not even compromise with such a future; to them the conflict was hideous and brutal. They could distinguish clearly enough the principles for which the two sets of belligerents were fighting: world-dominion on one side, and the preservation of democracy and freedom of national life on the other; but they were too appalled by the savagery and ruthlessness to keep in view the end for which the Allies were making their tremendous sacrifice of human life.

I never saw a soul shrink so from the horror of a thing, as Psyche's soul from the thought of this war. I tried to make her understand that the war, though the most terrible man has ever known, was different from any other because — whatever the causes of its beginning — it has developed into the most spiritual conflict nations have ever waged.

"Nations have fought for all sorts of ideals and principles," I said, "from the dawn of history to the Napoleonic wars, but the French Revolution was the first conflict of conscience, our own Civil War was the second, and this World War is the third — and God grant, the last. Europe, to-day, is not fighting for the sake of kings and courts — responsible as the Prussian Junker

is for the calamitous breakdown of civilization — nor for aristocracies nor capitalists; the battle is for humanity, the political independence of states and the social freedom of the individual. Not the men who are fighting in the cabinets or field-headquarters, but those who are fighting in the trenches are going to dictate the terms of peace. The diplomatists may sit around the table of the peace congress, but all they do and say will be commanded by those watching millions at home who have paid the price of victory. For these men are going home,— to homes which their absence has altered, to families that have done their bit of sacrifice too,— from the trenches, conscious of a great truth, a great aspiration, and a great strength; and they are going to say, with a mighty voice, the voice of humanity delivered from the thraldom of diplomacy and a minority class government, that: 'This kind of murder must stop. We have been crucified; our wives, children, and parents, have been crucified. Through this redemption we have won everlasting Peace!'"

It was evident nobody cared to comment on what I had said. Psyche sat musing at the distance which was limited everywhere by the woods. Cassandra was also preoccupied with thoughts which her face would not betray. I turned to Jason, and he sat with his back against the trunk of a tree smoking, blowing rings of smoke into the air. I waited some seconds, and as no one seemed inclined to break the silence I took my copy of Mr. Ad-

cock's "Songs of the World War," and began reading "The Path of Peace." It went:

"O brothers, though we fight in hostile powers,
We covet not your country, nor you ours;
Too long we wrecked each other's life in vain;
Whoever won, not ours nor yours the gain;
We are the common people; from of old
We have been duped and driven, bought and sold,
Ours but to blast each other down in hordes
And thus exalt our Kaisers and our Lords;
Too long, an ignorant and a slavish folk,
We humbly bowed and bore that blighting yoke,
Bore it for ends we never understood,
Obeyed our Masters — for our Masters' good;
But now (untaught, unlettered now no more)
We are not the blind brutes we were of yore,
Knowledge is sight — we know, and see, and feel,
And may no more like dogs be brought to heel.
To-day, one War Lord's raw, barbaric laws
Leave us no choice: we rise in Freedom's cause
And sacrifice to her our fellow men
On the hell-altars he has built again;
But when the task is done, and in our tread
We hear a bleak world weeping for its dead,
And see the hopes his blood-lust has abased,
The homes this shoddy Cæsar has laid waste,
O then, to saner, prouder manhood grown,
Shall we not hurl him from his pinchbeck throne? —
Not now by priestly prayers, nor foolish pride
Of kingly state, is murder sanctified —
O then, that squalid throne to ruin hurled,
Shall we not — we, the workers of the world,
The common peoples of all countries, find
A kinship in our common humankind,

And, scorning childish cant of wealth and caste,
Join hands in one great brotherhood at last,
Subdue our Masters to that equal law,
And rule ourselves, and make an end of War?

" Though our hearts ache, and darkness veils our eyes,
Our sorrows are but angels in disguise,
If from War's red field, when this strife shall cease,
Blooms the white flower of Universal Peace.

" So, from far off, the listening spirit hears
A music of the spheres;
Though heard too close, their sweet accord may round
To one gross roll of sound.

" And War, that with its thunderous gloom and gleam
Storms through our days, may seem,
By peaceful hearths, in some far-coming year,
A music that was discord heard too near.

" The soul of Beauty walks with aspect sad,
And not in beauty clad;
But when God's angels come, their passing by
Blinds us like light too nigh.

" But the too-dazzling day that dims our sight
Leads us when all its light,
Upgathered in Night's lifted hands afar,
Orbs to the still perfection of a star.

Mr. Adcock has admirably expressed in these lines what the world is thinking to-day," I appended to my reading.

Jason's thoughts, like a jack-in-the-box, sprang

from the revery in which his mind had been sealed. I concluded that his spirit was laboring in the silence he kept, and it was a kind of relief for him to come to in a vein of humor. "The witticism of Mr. Squire's verses is a good tonic for the war-ridden system of the world. He may not array himself in samite as your inspired idealist, but he preaches pretty nearly the same gospel though drunk with a libation tart as vinegar. What a difficult task he shows us is the neutrality of Heaven, in this nasty scrap across the ocean. It is set down in a poem most aptly called 'The Dilemma':

"God heard the embattled nations sing and shout
'Gott strafe England!' and 'God save the King!'
God this, God that, and God the other thing —
'Good God!' said God, 'I've got my work cut out.'"

I tried to ignore this epigrammic levity by turning to Psyche and picking up the threads of her objection to the war. "You see," I said, "behind the physical horror of it, which affects us all alike, there is a spiritual exaltation, cleansing and regenerative — the world-wide vision of a free humanity."

"The war is all wrong, all wrong," uttered Psyche passionately. The simple, blind truth of her statement seemed to take the point out of my argument. "It is wrong because it makes the sacrifice of that pure Man of Galilee a mockery. His gospel of peace and good-will, we have made, for nineteen hundred years, the cornerstone of our

social existence. Professing our absolute faith in His teachings, we desecrate, with hands of violence and lips of hatred, the very altar before which we kneel for hope and mercy. How can man be so false? Why can't he be honest with himself, and virtuous in dealing with his brother, and live in harmony with the Christian doctrines he professes, and strive for the high goal one sees vaguely raised in radiant dreams behind the gloom of this war, without all the destruction and misery now loose in the world?"

"Because, Psyche," Jason answered, "man must suffer and destroy to advance. No individual is greater than humanity; and this war is one of the symptoms of man's spiritual disease. When you look at it clearly and unflinchingly, all ways are dark ways, as that young poet of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, Joseph Mary Plunkett, expressed it. Listen," and Jason read:

"Rougher than death the road I choose,
Yet shall my feet not walk astray,
Though dark, my way I shall not lose,
For this way is the darkest way.

"Set but a limit to the loss
And something shall at last abide,
The blood-stained beams that formed the cross,
The thorns that crowned the crucified;

"But who shall lose all things in One,
Shut out from Heaven and the Pit
Shall lose the darkness and the sun,
The finite and the infinite;

"And who shall see in one small flower
The chariots and the thrones of night
Shall be in peril from that hour
Of blindness and the endless night;

"And who shall hear in one short name
Apocalyptic thunders seven
His heart shall flicker like a flame
'Twixt Hell's gates and the gates of Heaven.

"For I have seen your body's grace,
The miracle of the flowering rod,
And in the beauty of your face
The glory of the face of God,

"And I have heard the thunderous roll
Clamoured from heights of prophecy,
Your splendid name, and from my soul
Uprose the clouds of minstrelsy.

"Now I have chosen in the dark
The desolate way to walk alone
Yet strive to keep alive one spark
Of your known grace and grace unknown;

"And when I leave you lest my love
Should seal your spirit's ark with clay
Spread your bright wings, O shining Dove —
But my way is the darkest way."

"It was a terribly dark way those poor young Irishmen took," said Cassandra; "and I wonder if it will help their nation to reach the presence of the Shining Dove of liberty? I cannot help but think that they were wrong from a commonsense point of

view. Beauty was crushed and light darkened when their lives went out. Mr. Colum writes, in his introduction to the poems of these Irish dreamers and patriots, 'These are poems by Combatants. Their combat is passionate, intellectual, spiritual; in the end it exists for a country, and, to paraphrase the last line of Casement's sonnet, to win a rock where Celtic faith should bide its vow.' The commonsense point of view, of which I spoke, for the moment, is for expediency, which time will dissolve into the finer motive of these patriots. We may or may not sympathize with the sentiment which took sudden action to disrupt the unity of an empire when that empire was threatened by a ruthless enemy without. We should, however, respect the convictions of these poet-patriots to the cause of Ireland, which no one will deny has a measure of right on its side. So I can't help but believe that the benefit of their sacrifice was more than national. This may appear to contradict what I said a moment ago, but it really doesn't. What I mean is, that expressions so full of death and denial and self-abnegation, as the poems of these Irishmen, teach us the high and eternal value of spiritual life. They were conscious of failure in the mere physical accomplishments of their aims; they courageously threw away their lives for a cause, in which they nobly and unselfishly became the seeds of a future triumph. Can they be counted as failures, then? The nearest answer is in these poems. Here is one, 'Of a Poet Patriot':

" His songs were a little praise
Of eternal song,
Drowned in the harping of lays
More loud and long.

" His deeds were a single word
Called out alone
In a night when no echo stirred
To laughter or moan.

" But his songs new souls shall thrill,
The loud harps dumb,
And his deed the echoes fill
When the dawn is come."

" Let me read," pleaded Psyche, " Thomas MacDonagh's poem, ' Wishes for My Son,' whose tenderness is enough to moisten men's eyes in memory of this Irishman:

" Now, my son, is life for you,
And I wish you joy of it,—
Joy of power in all you do,
Deeper passion, better wit
Than I had who had enough,
Quicker life and length thereof,
More of every gift but love.

" Love I have beyond all men,
Love that now you share with me —
What have I to wish you then
But that you be good and free,
And that God to you may give
Grace in stronger days to live?

" For I wish you more than I
Ever knew of glorious deed,
Though no rapture passed me by
That an eager heart could heed,
Though I followed heights and sought
Things the sequel never brought:

" Wild and perilous holy things
Flaming with a martyr's blood,
And the joy that laughs and sings
Where a foe must be withstood,
Joy of headlong happy chance
Leading on the battle dance.

" But I found no enemy,
No man in a world of wrong,
That Christ's word of Charity
Did not render clean and strong —
Who was I to judge my kind,
Blindest groper of the blind?

" God to you may give the sight
And the clear undoubting strength
Wars to knit for single right,
Freedom's war to knit at length,
And to win, through wrath and strife,
To the sequel of my life.

" But for you, so small and young,
Born on Saint Cecilia's Day,
I in more harmonious song
Now for nearer joys should pray —
Simple joys: the natural growth
Of your childhood and your youth,
Courage, innocence, and truth:

"These for you, so small and young,
In your hand and heart and tongue."

"Yes," murmured Cassandra, to whom Psyche's reading of the poem brought a deeper tinge of sadness for the fate of the poet-patriot, "they were very wrong in the method, but somehow very, very right in the deed."

"Isn't that a paradox?" asked Jason.

"That's her privilege, being a woman," I explained, "and doubly her privilege speaking about Irishmen. But I think I see her point. Ireland may be under the spell of the patriot, but the world is honoring and praising the poet. Would it be surprising, after all, if the world takes from Sir Roger Casement's sonnet 'Hamilcar Barca' the final meaning of that explosive Easter Sunday?" And I read these lines:

"Thou that did'st mark from Heirote's spacious hill
The Roman spears, like mist, uprise each morn,
Yet held, with Hesper's shining point of scorn,
Thy sword unsheathed above Panormus still;
Thou that wert leagued with nought but thine own will,
Eurythmic vastness to that stronghold torn
From foes above, below, where, though forlorn,
Thou still hadst claws to cling and beak to kill —
Eagle of Eryx! — when the Ægatian shoal
Rolled westward all the hopes that Hanno wrecked,
With mighty wing, unwearying, did'st thou
Seek far beyond the wolf's grim protocol,
Within the Iberian sunset faintly specked
A rock where Punic faith should bide its vow."

"I would like to know," Jason asked, "if we are to cherish the patriot or the poet in Mr. Viereck's book of Armageddon? I have never believed that Mr. Viereck was a true poet, and I am sure he has not proved himself a very good patriot — that is, to the country in which he has become a citizen, and which has permitted his egotism to have the freest play."

"Strangely enough," I replied, "to me Mr. Viereck has proved himself a better poet in this book of Armageddon, than in any volume he has published. Of course, I don't at all subscribe to his opinions, and his betrayal of our national hospitality; but I do think his emotions, disagreeable as they may be, are genuine in this book, which they did not seem to be in those earlier, frothy emanations of his. He has never written anything more genuine than the little poem called 'The Doubles.'"

"And so he is to be forgiven for such poems as 'Wilhelm II., Prince of Peace,' 'The Neutral,' 'Italy — 1915,' and 'The German American to His Adopted Country,' because he writes so lovely a thing as 'The Doubles'?" asked Jason.

"They determine their own worth," I answered, without compromise to either point of view.

"Yes," scoffed Jason, "the delicious irony of 'Wilhelm II., Prince of Peace,' which I am not going to quote because I deliberately court anger now and then, is a commendable poetic virtue — when it is fortified with truth. But this poem holds to fact the kind of truth which Prussian paternalism has to democracy."

I had no comment to make. We were all a little irritated in remembering the tone of the verses, and thought it best to let Jason's remarks pass. Psyche presently spoke. It was in a key wholly unexpected. "Oh, life is better than we make it," she said, "and, after all, a lapse in any direction does not wholly spoil the harmony of existence. I suppose, war is only a lapse on a gigantic scale. Browning was right to make Pippa joyous and prophetic. 'What's all wrong to-day will be all right to-morrow!'"

V

PEACOCK PIE

We had fallen into a desultory discussion on the way to the grove on the prodigality of nature. The woods had never been so wonderful as this year. The carpeting of moss on the ground was lovely, and of a rich shade of green, clustered thick with tiny flowers, all of whose names I did not know, as the heavens are with stars. They were of all shapes and colors, from a wine red star to a delicate pale green trumpet. The mountain laurel was profuse, and in one swampy hollow where we found it on a rainy day, its transparent pink and white blossoms gave me a Watteau-like emotion of fragility. The underbrush here was very tangled, making a network of vines and foliage about the fallen branches and tree trunks; and I rather cherish the picture of Psyche, breaking through brush high as her waist, and getting thoroughly wet, in gathering great armfuls of the secluded blossoms. The open spaces in woods were full of the largest daisies I had ever seen. Poets have called the daisies regal, but these were the first that my eyes beheld really having the pomp of sceptre and crown. Their stems were stately and tall, and their great long petals made

a circle of bright shields around the gorgeous golden domes.

The ashes from the forest fires of the previous year had fertilized all this beauty in the flowers, ferns and moss. The incessantly wet spring retarding the blossoming of flowers had preserved odors and colors in their freshness and perfection beyond the calendar period of maturity. "Nature is a wonderful artist," remarked Psyche, holding in her fingers a wild orchid she plucked from the bank of the stagnant stream along the car tracks we crossed on our way from The Farm. "Man can never make anything so beautiful for all his subtle devising of materials."

"That's a truth it seems almost foolish to question," I commented. "But the more astonishing speculation to engage my interest, is the remarkable anthologist which nature proves herself to be."

"Nature creates, but does she select?" asked Cassandra. "We speak of man creating — in music, painting, sculpture, poetry — in all the arts; but does he? Doesn't he merely select and copy? You remember in that stupendous poem by Anna Hempstead Branch, 'Nimrod,' she says that 'Man has never created a new virtue.' Well, did man ever create a new beauty? All the virtues and all the beauties were here when he came, or arrived in his evolution at a mental or spiritual state where he could distinguish and appreciate them. Then he found them, both the virtues and the beauties, so necessary to his happiness that he began to

copy and idealize them in symbols of his own making. These took the form of language, sound, pigments, clay, stone and metal. Man is still primary in his use of these materials compared with the subtle and infinite variety of nature's creative processes."

"I think Cassandra has stated the case for nature convincingly," agreed Jason. "She is only an anthologist in her distribution, her grouping and arrangement of the creations for which she is alone responsible."

"Well, even in this phase of her ceaseless and mysterious activity," I said, as we arrived at the grove and settled comfortably upon the ground, under the cool and fragrant protection of our pine, "man copies the editorial capacity of nature."

The remark amused Psyche. "Nature, an editor, as well as an artist!" she exclaimed. "I wonder if the anemone, or the dandelion, is critical of her judgment. The rhododendron might complain that she does not give it enough sun and too much shade. The common flowers like the buttercup and daisy ought to object that their grouping is too profuse, and do not present the same attraction for the eye as the wild rose, or the mountain laurel, in the anthology of woods and fields. Poets are like flowers,— hasn't the sentimentalist said so time and again; and I daresay, could we know, flowers are like poets; the dandelion wants to be a rose! How many poets dream of being a Shakespeare, a Shelley, a Tennyson, or a Browning."

"The dandelions and anemones among poets —

or to be flat and offensive about it, the minor poet — ought not to complain," Jason presented his opinion, " since the only immortality many of them have a chance to win, is in the pages of some anthology. In all the books they may write or publish, and which the world at large never hears of, is a perfect poem or two, and some discerning anthologist discovers them, rescues and preserves that bit of beauty for posterity in a book of selections."

" It was this very thought of Jason's that set me to a little task of arithmetic," I informed my companions. " When I finished reading the five anthologies feeding our poetic appetite this week, I counted the number of poets they contained and the number of poems."

" Why, I did the very same thing," interrupted Cassandra. " I was curious to discover how many of the poets I knew and how many were unknown to me. I found there were two hundred and eighty-seven poets and five hundred and ninety-eight poems."

" That's exactly my count," I said. " The new names were, indeed, very numerous. Such compilations as the ' Chicago Anthology ' and ' A Book of Princeton Verse,' furnished most of them, though that radical ' bower of dainty devices,' edited by Mr. Kreymborg, presented a good share of innocents. But the point is," I reminded my companions, " that a number of these poets would be entirely lost in oblivion, if the best of what they accomplished had not been preserved in collections of this sort."

"Well," said Psyche, "this book of Princeton verse, with its 'annual' dated, and Mr. Kreymborg's anthology of 'new' verse, are following in missionary footsteps."

"Oh, don't say that," I protested. "The good that is being accomplished for the art of poetry in these efforts, is too important for one to quibble about the honor of an idea. Let's rather be frank about the quality of the performance in itself. That is the attitude I desire towards any effort of my own. Honesty of opinion and conviction are the virtues I demand in critics. If they have these I can respect, even admire, their differences to the point of severe censure."

"But isn't there something to be said of the manner in expressing a difference of opinion?" asked Cassandra.

"Oh, that takes care of itself, in my belief," I answered. "The force of an argument is often defeated by impoliteness, loss of temper, or bitterness. A truth sponsored by these feelings is a truth robbed of dignity, and neglected by those who really believe in it because of shabbiness."

"Oh, that's not bad as an aphorism," said Jason, "if you had clothed it with brevity. I fancy Oscar Wilde would have said, 'Truth with the parentage of bad manners grows in shabbiness to be scorned by rich relatives,' and added another jewel to the crown of his wit and wisdom. As for you, you send an excellent thought begging for the appropriate company of speech."

"I am not at all jealous of your superior gift, Jason, orphaning four words," I responded. "A little energy on your part and we would have a renaissance of comedy."

"It is woman's duty to be patient — when men exercise their wit," Cassandra remarked, addressing herself to Psyche. "It's an intolerable burden. I am sure Eve tasted the apple in desperation because of Adam's jokes. You see there was no one else to listen to their eternal repetition. Sharing her knowledge of good and evil, Adam became a serious man for the first time in his life. That knowledge saddled him with a family to support and no time for joking. And man has never been grateful to woman for giving him a sense of dignity."

Psyche was amused, and the rest of us reflected her amusement. "Let us turn to serious affairs," she said. "I'm just aching to say what a fine book is Mrs. Waldo Richards' 'High Tide.'"

"Do you mean the book, or the poems for which the book was made?" asked Jason. "You know people confuse the two." We were all perplexed for a moment, searching for his meaning. Psyche's face showed clearly she was pained as well. That hurt caught Jason unaware. "Please, Psyche," he beseeched for pardon, "people have such a vague notion of what makes a book. Type, paper and binding make a book; the substance of thought and feeling to which words give expression is really not a book, it may be drama, novel, philosophy, history, biography, poetry, for the com-

munication or presentation of which, a book is designed, just as a Pullman car is designed to carry a certain lot of humanity from one city to another. So the book may be fine and the contents anything the human mind has made it."

Psyche, as the rest of us, took the explanation in good part, though I could not help but remark, for her sake, that the point was a little irrelevant. "If we begun," I said, "defining the terms of speech we would get hopelessly nowhere with our meaning of things. People get accustomed to certain words and phrases meaning pretty definitely a particular thing, and in spite of the rage and despair of grammarians, usage gives legitimacy to acquired connotations."

"Well, it's a pretty muddled world after all," Jason surrendered, "and I don't suppose language can live in a state of purity when there is a touch of corruption in everything else."

"You need to be reminded, Jason," was Psyche's rejoinder, "that the sub-title of Mrs. Richards' anthology is 'Songs of Joy and Vision from the Present-Day Poets of America and Great Britain.' The hopeful outlook the book gives upon the life of man is a fine corrective for the mood of pessimism. This is why to me it is the most important of these collections."

"I agree that the book — with apologies to Jason — contains some of the best contemporary work that has been done by English and American poets. The selections are chosen with the purpose of expressing the highest spiritual impulse of nu-

man nature; but it also contains some very indifferent work," I said.

"It is true, all the same," broke in Jason, "that for a sane, comfortable view of the human spirit, in its joys and visions, it's the kind of a collection that people who will not read many poets for themselves, or perhaps, any poet at all if they don't have to, will enjoy when they are made acquainted with it. I should say," he reflected, "that the collection is in a minor key what Robert Bridges' 'The Spirit of Man,' is in a major key."

"Then in what key would you put 'A Book of Princeton Verse'?" I asked.

"Among 'Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminish'd,'" Jason quoted. "I don't know what key they're in, unless the key of youth suffices. But surely the 'dominant's persistence,' is not a characteristic, though I presume Psyche would prefer the key, whatever you've decided to call it, to the 'commiserating sevenths' of Mr. Kreymborg's anthology."

"I am sure I do," Psyche hastened to agree. "This Princeton verse is very interesting. There is, of course, none of the absolute vulgarity that is in some of the verse in Mr. Kreymborg's book. The atmosphere of youth is all about it, which is naturally due to its origin; and there is the note of restraint, to me the most vital quality of the youthful mind — it is only physically that youth abandons itself — which Mr. Noyes in his capacity of sponsor seems to favor. The future of some of these young men is well worth watching. All the

names are new to me, and only lately in an issue of *Scribner's Magazine*, did I meet with any of these poets in another place. That poet is Mr. Hamilton Fish Armstrong. I suppose *Scribner's* ought to be loyal to Princeton poets, since the publishers and editor are Princeton men. These Princeton poets are very conservative and traditional, however, which may be somewhat due to the influence of Mr. Noyes. Harvard poets are much more radical, though not in the matter of form. There is an acceptance at Cambridge among the undergraduates of Imagism; one or two very excellent theses were written on the subject, for honors, but they fell before more conservative subjects. This influence is not, however, shown in the college poetry. At Yale, I am told, the significance of poetry among the undergraduates is less marked. Stephen Vincent Benét is the shining exception. But among graduates from the college of recent years, are a number of poets of exceptional talents."

"Our colleges and universities are harvesting their poets as one of the fruits of culture," I remarked. "Harvard, Yale, now Princeton,— and pretty soon Vassar,— have given names to collections of verse representative of the work done by students who have matriculated at these institutions."

"In this Princeton book," Psyche continued the thread of her previous remarks, "there are some lovely things; and such names as Hamilton Fish Armstrong, John Peale Bishop, Harrington Green,

Francis Charles MacDonald, and Brooks Henderson, are, I am certain, to be heard from again. This poem of Mr. Bishop's, 'Ganymede,' has gleams of that light which burned in the hearts of Keats and Shelley." And Psyche read:

"Filled full of madness, flushed and stained with crimson,
Round the courts of heaven goes a fair, swift throng,
Hair all dishevelled, crowned with bay and rose-leaves,
Filling all the heavens with a wild, sweet song.

"Loud shouts and laughter shake the gilded roof-trees,
Love entreats a chorus and the gold roof rings;
Far through the tumult sounds the plaint of viols,
Swift-kissing symbals and faint lute-strings.

"Dark-haired and dark-eyed, Bacchus young and gracious,
Chapleted with violets and green wild vine,
One arm uplifted, tilts his glowing chalice,
Pouring on the pavement the spiced red wine.

"Earth-born, I sicken here amid the wine-jars,
Carved of cunning ivory with pale gold laid;
Now swells the springtide through the silent green-wood,
Now the grasses brighten in the sun-tinct glade.

"Three miles from Troy town lies a secret meadow,
Girt with green recesses which the sun scarce cleaves;

Cool-dewed at dawn, and at noon made sweet with grasses,
Dusky-petalled violets, and last year's leaves.

" Dark-banded, girt with deep serene recesses,
Where the noon scarce wakens the night-drowsed bee;
Dusk-bound, but oh, the endless sunny billows,
Clothed with waving shadow when the wind runs free.

" Curled golden waters ripple in the sun there,
When the swallow skims through the sword-edged reeds,
White-bellied, bright-winged, full of summer's music,
Shedding starry spray through the gray marsh reeds.

" Clean-limbed and sun-hued, the happy brave companions
Poised in naked beauty on the stream's soft rims.
Arms strained behind him, till the sudden signal
Ploughs the shining waters with their brown, bright limbs.

" There, too, they wade in among the circling shallows,
Dip their tangled fish-nets in the cool brown stream,
One edge upholden, one beneath the surface,
Gliding where the crimson and steel fins gleam.

" Dew-sandalled, fleet-foot, racing through the hollows
Waking hilly echoes with a boy's light cries;

Or haply day-long watching white and silver
Rise in cloudy headlands in the wide blue skies.

"Long lasts the day there, in the happy valley,
Then the journey homeward to the safe warm town;
Full-orbed the moon hangs white above the uplands,
Darker grow the thickets as the road winds down.

"Down dusky pathways, through the dewy orchard,
Clothed with honied blossom where the gray moth sips,
Glad, sad, and weary, you gain the trellised doorway,
Where through muffling grape-vine a warm light slips.

"Black oaken settles stand before the fireplace,
Smoky, stained by winter in the good years dead;
Red gleams the firelight on the lustrous copper;
Softly glow the tables with the day's feast spread.

"Dew-sweet the honey, sweet the crumbling wheat-cakes,
Foaming white the new milk in brown clay jars;
Last the tired pallet in the fragrant bedroom
Open to the night-wind and the large white stars.

"All night you hear the sound of distant waters
Chafing on the pebbles in the sand-strewn caves,
Far-off you hear them crumbling down the sea-cliff,
Catch, too, the savor of the salt sharp waves.

" Fair dreams, but vain. Ah, hark, again the viols
Rise above the laughter and the wine-mad fray.
Jove leans and drains his revel-stainèd wine-cup,
Waves me to his side, and I dare not stay.

These are elaborately chiseled verses," Psyche commented, when she finished reading; " there is in them the glow of something which is of the imperishable substance of simple and quiet moods vibrant with memories. If an association must be recollected with an effort it has lost the spirit which creates beauty. In it there is no element of dream; it is a dead thing, to be scattered with the ashes of oblivion. For this reason, if for no other, this poem is more beautiful than a hundred attempts of incoherent groping after life, by your modernist. He makes you see life in its ugliness, not because he fails to see it truthfully, and even picturesquely, but because it is not graduated into the scale of chiaroscuro. One sees this arrangement all about, in experience and observation, the lights and shadows of circumstance and fact, but your modern poet of the extreme type throws life altogether in a flat white light or into a mass of gloomy shadows."

" Oh, come now, Psyche," I bantered; " don't be too hard on Mr. Kreymborg's brood, whom you have hit below the belt. I admit, to change the figure, that all's not gold that glitters; but good steel and even iron, has its practical value. Besides, I am not willing to admit there is no gold in this collection of ' new ' verse — though, exactly where the ' newness ' comes in, I can't see. Have any of

you," I asked my companions, "read that article in a recent number of *The Unpopular Review*, on 'What Do We Mean by Poetry?' written by Arthur Colton? Well, here," I said, pulling out my note-book, "is an extract from it I want to read to you. 'It is quite time,' says the author, 'that the jaded subjectivity of the last generation is disappearing and something more robust seems to be coming in; the tendency does seem to be toward "externality" and more or less colloquial language. But the "new manner" makes haste after a cant of its own. "Seeking colors in a dust heap," no more than yearning after "noble thoughts" or enjoying a pensive melancholy, will cure a weak brother of his futility. Those who find most satisfaction in, and most frequently make use of, such phrases as "new manner," "free verse," "modern work," are probably of no great significance in the drift and shifting of the age, movements that have little enough to do with technique. It would have been better for Wordsworth if he had never had a theory of simple diction, but merely done what his soul bade him do. There was as much cant in his theory as in the theory of poetic diction. Neither theory had any value. There was a real movement going on then, and there is now; but it was not then, and is not now, very material what doctrines anyone held, or hold, about diction.' There," I remarked, closing my book, "that is what I have been preaching ever since these new writers have invaded the peace of mind, and disturbed the prejudices and conventions

of our critics and readers. It is as final an utterance as one can make about the form of poetry. And with this in mind, one cannot really fail to recognize the gold in Mr. Kreymborg's volume. There is not, I'll admit, overmuch of it, but poets like Mary Aldis, Walter Conrad Arensberg, Adelaide Crapsey, Hester Sainsbury, and Wallace Stevens, give it to us."

"Let us consider Hester Sainsbury as one of the givers of gold," I said, "and this very beautiful poem, 'Spring, A Ballet to Words Danced by Five Dancers, Three Girls and Two Children,' which I shall read, as a proof of it:

"Earth like a butterfly
Leaps in gold
From its chrysalis old
And stiff and cold.
A frail pale sky
On the brink of dissolving in dreams
Covers the year's new birth;
While a passionless sun spinning beams
To recapture the heart of the earth —
Half daring, half shy,
Looking ready to die,
Like a sigh,
If a violent wind went by —
Marries earth to sky.

"The grass breaks in ripples of flowers,
In purple and chrome,
As a sea breaks in foam;
And the lilacs in fountains and showers
Of emerald rain, fling
Their tiny green buds on the wing —

Just poised on the edge of the spring —
To fly
Bye and bye,
To burst into loveliness airily fair,
In garlands for dryads to weave in their hair,
In a virginal dance
With a scent to entrance
The sweet fickle air —
And late when the evening
Comes subtle and blue,
And stars are all opening
Hearts of bright dew —
The sun will slip easily,
Tenderly,
Bright,
Out of sight,
More silver than gold
To behold —
Not as in summer he dies,
When low in the West he lies
In the sanguine flood
Of his own heart's blood,
Shot by the shaft of the maiden moon,
With regret in his eyes
That the amazon comes too soon.

" And my little son
Has run
From me
To the flowery hills to the dappled sea;
For somebody told him that shepherds in spring
Taste the new green sap of the old green trees,
And pluck a feather from the wing
Of a throstle
While they sing,

All together,
In a ring,
And toss it up into the breeze;
And their brains
Go mad with the ecstasy coursing their veins,
And they wreathe them in violets, dance them in dew,
Till their ankles are blue,
Through and through
Enchantingly cold with sweet pains —
While the sun in the clouds
Gold-dapples the sheep,
Till the stars in bright crowds
Tempt the shepherds to sleep;
Who with eyes, wild dark,
And hair like a flame,
Singing still like the lark,
Cry loud on the name
Of each his Corinna to come and be tame
To his love,
Like a dove;

"And their sheep
Turn to silver — and sleep.
And my little boy
With his young spring joy
Will not discover the leanness of truth;
With the magical,
Tragical,
Credence of youth
He will think the sane shepherds he meets on his way
Are mad to-morrow
To his sorrow,
Or yesterday."

" Having proved that there are true and beautiful poems in Mr. Kreymborg's anthology, then the burden is upon you to prove the same of this 'Catholic Anthology,' Jason put to me. " It needs no very careful guessing that Ezra Pound, to whom Mr. James Stephens addressed a scathing epistle in the anger of his Irish heart — a most humorous epistle, too — is responsible for this collection."

" If that is a kind of challenge, Jason, I'll confess my defeat immediately. When you take away the value which the work of Mr. Masters and one or two others give the book, it simply invites one to censure. And that I will proceed to do.

" In the first place let me quote a stanza from Mr. Yeats' poem which, given the prominence of italics and the place of a foreword, must be taken as the standard around which poetic revolutionaires rally:

" Bald heads forgetful of their sins,
Old, learned, respectable bald heads
Edit and annotate the lines
That young men, tossing on their beds,
Rhymed out in love's despair
To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.

In these lines one can discover the particular creed of this poetic catholicism. It means that there are no 'bald-headed' minds among these poets; of that, one must be assured, and be equally assured that no one is going to 'edit and annotate' their lines (but, good Lord, how some of them need it!);

and, again be assured, that it takes a 'tossing on their beds'— which is interpreted to mean, that only a violent nausea produces the poetry of these young men; and all for the futile flattering of 'beauty's ignorant ear.' Being wiser than beauty, why do these young men flatter her? It is not that they find beauty ignorant; they find her deaf, because she will not tolerate their stupid insincerities.

"Well, their first insincerity, is in calling themselves 'catholic.' To be catholic, is to be universal, liberal, broad-minded. And here we find only those poets who take their cue from Ezra Pound. This man who, from the safe distance of London, calls America a 'sink-pot,' this astute expounder of cults will quote somebody or other of Provence or Endor (circa 1313), and say that to be catholic is to be neither religious nor conventional, and that the application of the term, to a certain group of obscure modern poets, is towards an unrestricted freedom in dealing with life. As a matter of fact, these poets do not deal with life; they deal with their own little conception of it, and as they imagine it in the tumbled sheets of Mr. Yeats' vision. Their next insincerity is affectation, displaying moods and tempers, through which the plain surface of life is distorted to deceive the reader that he is really in touch with some very subtle emotional forces. No amount of argument for art's sake, or for any other thing's sake, can alter the plain truth of this. Reason may be a very subtle and abstract element, and

it is sometimes very difficult to trace it in the most beautiful and magical of expressions, but somehow it will convince you that it exists and is the life of such a poem as 'Kubla Khan,' or Blake's 'The Tiger,'— but I defy anyone to detect a semblance of it in any one of the quotations I shall read from this anthology. Listen to this from Orrick Johns:

"Oh, beautiful mind,
I lost it
In a lot of frying pans
And calendars and carpets
And beer bottles . . .
Oh, my beautiful mind!

Or this, from William Carlos Williams:

"Even in the time when as yet
I had no certain knowledge of her
She sprung from the nest, a young crow.
Whose first flight circled the forest.
I know now how then she showed me
Her mind, reaching out to the horizon,
She close above the tree tops.
I saw her eyes straining at the new distance
And as the woods fell from her flying
Likewise they fell from me as I followed —
So that I guessed all that I must put from me
To come through ready for the high courses.
But one day, crossing the ferry
With the great towers of Manhattan before me,
Out at the prow with the sea wind blowing,
I had been wearying many questions
Which she had put on to try me:

How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?
When Lo! in a rush, dragging
A blunt boat on the yielding river —
Suddenly I saw her! And she waved me
From the white wet in the midst of her playing!
She cried me, 'Haia! Here I am, son!
See how strong my little finger is!
Can I not swim well?
I can fly, too!' And with that a great sea-gull
Went to the left, vanishing with a wild cry —
But in my mind all the persons of godhead
Followed after.

From the arch-priest of this cult, Ezra Pound, I'll recommend that you re-read the poem called 'Further Instructions.'

"Rather pathetic, isn't it? Where's the common sense in all this? This eager, pitiful striving after effect; this cunning attempt to attract with bizarre illusions; this utter disregard for all decency of thought and feeling. I have no fault to find with the form a poet uses. He may with deliberate intention, as Mr. Orrick Johns has, abandon the regular metres of 'The Sea Lands,' an early lyric, and one of the most beautiful the past decade can show, and take up free verse. It is what he makes of it with his individual power; how sane, and in good taste, he keeps his spirit. I realize that all along the line, the art must advance; that innovations must be attempted, and even bold and daring attitudes be taken. But there are proprieties in art, just as there are in life. These proprieties may conceal other than

virtuous qualities, and not to condemn them, may seem hypocritical. But it really isn't; it is taking the world as it goes. The meaning behind this poetic catholicism — I will at least credit it with a meaning though the poets do not live up to it — is a refusal to take the world as it goes, but as it happens to be beneath the surface. A few poets in this rather curious volume seem to realize this fact. Alfred Kreymborg strikes me as one worthy of genuine admiration and respect. I would like to present you with the testimony of a poem called 'The Next Drink,' which, to my satisfaction, proves it:

"It's a marvelous age we live in!
(It is, sir!)
In Greece, they fought with mere javelins and spears!
(Child's play!)
In later times,— well, what of Bonaparte?
(Waterloo?)
And the poor pretty handful who fell?
(Tin soldiers!)
When you think of the motors and aeroplanes
(The dreadnoughts!)
And the million of men in the field at one time
(A million dead!)
The seas and seas of bullets and blood!
(And the gold!)
Yes, the twenty-two millions a day that it costs!
(Vanderbilt's fortune!)
Why, we're right to be proud, sir, and happy and gay!
(That we are!)

It's our duty, we should be, we should be!
(We should!)
Come, have the next drink on me!

Well, my friends, whatever you may think, to me that's commonsense — and it's poetry."

"And you pretend to find commonsense in Imagism?" asked Psyche.

"I've had a pretty long say about the catholicism of Ezra Pound and his friends," I answered, "and perhaps Jason may prefer to take up your question."

"No, no," Jason quickly voiced his refusal. "I desire a deeper conviction on the accomplishment of Imagism before rhapsodizing about its merits. You have surrendered to its charms," he added, charging me with a certain popular opinion, "and I am sure Psyche and Cassandra, as well as myself, would rather you make clear to us the aims and achievements of this movement."

"If you can stand for my garrulity I don't object," I responded. "But first you must understand that I have not surrendered to any particular school of poetry. My purpose has been to recognize good poetry wherever I've been able to find it. My conception — nor my judgment, for that matter — of poetry may not be acceptable to every one, and I have hardly expected that it would. No man's has been. This is because the world has not been able to say, this is poetry, as it says, this is white or this is black. The elements of poetry are like the fundamental colors; emotion, passion, imagination, are those

fundamentals. Just as you make every combination of shades and hues from the fundamental colors, so is every combination of experience made from these fundamental qualities of human nature. As it is difficult for some people to distinguish colors, so it is difficult for some people to distinguish real poetry in the confusion of substance and form.

"I don't accept mere Imagism as poetry any more than I accept mere verse as poetry," I continued. "But the Imagist may be a poet in the same way that a verse-maker is a poet. Imagism isn't poetry, nor is verse-making poetry —"

Here Jason interrupted me; he could not restrain from retorting: "But is Imagism verse-making? This, I think, is the objection to the whole movement."

"Yes, and it is the fallacy of condemning the movement," I answered his last sentence first. "The next fallacy is to regard verse-making as the whole of poetry. My answer to your question, Jason, is that Imagism is verse-making as much as any style of rhythmical expression within a restricted design."

"Why a restricted design?" Jason threw back at me.

"All expression is rhythmic. An unrestricted rhythm is a prose rhythm. It may be designed, but the specifications are for a public building,— a court-house or skyscraper, not for a private residence."

"Oh, you can run up and down stairs in one,

but you must take the elevator in the other," was Jason's apt contrast of stress in the two rhythms.

"Something like that if your meaning gets over," I agreed.

"Well, go on," he said; "it sounds interesting, anyway."

"Take the matter of form, then," I continued. "Isn't the whole ridiculous case of censure exploded in this paragraph, which I shall read from the anthology of this group, 'Some Imagist Poets: 1916'; 'The *vers libristes*,' it says, 'are often accused of declaring that they have discovered a new thing. Where such an idea started it is impossible to say, certainly none of the better *vers libristes* was ever guilty of so ridiculous a statement. The name *vers libre* is new, the thing, most emphatically, is not. Not new in English poetry, at any rate. You will find something very much like it in Dryden's "Threnodia Augustalis"; a great deal of Milton's "Samson Agonistes" is written in it; and Matthew Arnold's "Philomela" is a shining example of it. Practically all of Henley's "London Voluntaries" are written in it, and (so potent are names) until it was christened *vers libre*, no one thought of objecting to it. But the oldest reference to *vers libre* is to be found in Chaucer's "House of Fame" where the Eagle addresses the Poet in these words:

> "'And nevertheless hast set thy wyt
> Although that in thy heed full lyte is
> To make bookes, songes, or dytees
> In rhyme or elles in cadence.'

Commentators have wasted reams of paper in an endeavor to determine what Chaucer meant by this. But is it not possible that he meant a verse based upon rhythm, but which did not follow the strict metrical prosody of his usual practice?'"

"Your Imagist takes a little too much for granted," Jason interrupted. "May not Chaucer have meant by the line 'In Rhyme or elles in cadence,'— in assonance? The opposite here is 'rhyme,' not rhythm. The voice falls at the end of a line upon the rhyme; cadence indicates this falling, and if it cannot fall upon a rhyme, I think Chaucer meant, upon an associated, instead of, exact sound. That would be an assonance. Of course, my interpretation may be taken for what it is worth; it is at least, as reasonable as the Imagist's."

"I don't mean to defend a mis-interpretation, even in case of proof," I answered Jason. "But that's beside the point. Like all eager enthusiasts, the Imagists made mistakes. Because they have is no reason why we should deny their claims to fair and honest criticism. The severest weapon used against them has been ridicule. In literature, and especially poetry, this weapon kills quicker than any other. Yet they have published two issues of their anthology. And they have been very successful volumes. The mistakes they made in the first issue, are corrected in the second. They laid a little too much stress on the form of their art. They have realized that substance is more

important, and when they declare that poetry (and how often must it be said before it is understood?) is 'not a question of typography; it is not even a question of rules and forms. Poetry is the vision in man's soul which he translates as best he can with the means at his disposal,' we find them climbing up the slopes of the same Parnassus all other poets climb. To reach at the top, what? Why, that which all other poets strive to reach, a 'vision of man's soul.'

"So the six poets, Richard Aldington, H. D., John Gould Fletcher, F. S. Flint, D. H. Lawrence, and Amy Lowell, who collaborate in producing this standard volume of the Imagist movement, must be judged upon their precise merits as poets. Because their aims are in common, we get an overemphasis of a note which is one of the Imagist's cardinal virtues. This is a kind of hardness. In trying to escape blurring the 'central effect,' by capturing the 'exact' word to 'bring the effect of the object before the reader,' without the blend of similes, they stiffen the substance too much. Thus their pride is in being definite. This leaves them open to the charge of being without emotion and passion. They do not lack either. Emotion is like that famous cordial, 'Southern Comfort,' which must be iced to bring out its best flavor, and passion is a kind of hydraulics —"

"Just a minute," Jason stopped me with his hand. "I simply want to say," he explained as I gave him my attention, "that isn't bad about

Imagist emotion being like iced cordial, but passion and hydraulics, isn't that a bit fetched? I'll admit their verse sound like hydraulics to me, but of all modern poets their passion is in the least state of fluidity!"

"It is the nearest I could come to an analogy of what their passion was like," I confessed. "It has terrific power and drive, with the source of energy all nicely out of reach. But we must not seek in these poets what they have not offered to give us. Sentiment of the common variety is entirely eschewed. Aldington, Flint and Lawrence, as Englishmen, passing through the storm and stress of their country at war, possess the faintest tint of moral uneasiness; but the three Americans are either too dead or too alive to it, to have their moods tinctured. Strange enough, though, these three American poets, as well as their English confrères, are imbued with a note of meditation, a note singularly absent from the earlier collection of this group. With H. D., it is a hard, tonal exultation in nature; almost a pagan, weird natural symbolism, linked with an over-awed human submission. In the 'Sea Gods,' this poet has a quality of elusive magic that is entirely individual. Let me read the poem:

"They say there is no hope —
sand — drift — rocks — rubble of the sea —
the broken hulk of a ship,
hung with shreds of rope,
pallid under the cracked pitch.

" They say there is no hope
to conjure you —
no whip of the tongue to anger you —
no hate of words
you must rise to refute.

" They say you are twisted by the sea,
you are cut apart
by wave-break upon wave-break,
that you are misshapen by the sharp rocks,
broken by the rasp and after-rasp.

" That you are cut, torn, mangled,
torn by the stress and beat,
no stronger than the strips of sand
along your ragged beach.

II

" But we bring violets,
great masses — single, sweet,
wood-violets, stream-violets,
violets from a wet marsh.

" Violets in clumps from hills,
tufts with earth at the roots,
violets tugged from rocks,
blue violets, moss, cliff, river-violets.

" Yellow violets' gold,
burnt with a rare tint —
violets like red ash
among tufts of grass.

" We bring deep-purple
bird-foot violets.

We bring the hyacinth-violet,
sweet, bare, chill to the touch —
and violets whiter than the in-rush
of your own white surf.

III

" For you will come,
you will yet haunt men in ships,
you will trail across the fringe of strait
and circle the jagged rocks.

" You will trail across the rocks
and wash them with your salt,
you will curl between sand-hills —
you will thunder along the cliff —
break — retreat — get fresh strength —
gather and pour weight upon the beach.

" You will draw back,
and the ripple on the sand-shelf
will be witness of your track.

" O privet-white, you will paint
the lintel of wet sand with froth.

You will bring myrrh-bark
and drift laurel-wood from hot coasts.
when you hurl high — high —
we will answer with a shout.

" For you will come,
you will come,
you will answer our taut hearts,
you will break the lie of men's thoughts,
and cherish and shelter us.

"Now, in Richard Aldington," I continued, "we have also a poet of exceptionally fine perceptions. His mind dwells in two worlds; one which he will not escape from, the other from which he cannot escape. Two strains of music blend, cross and separate, in his dreams. 'Eros and Psyche' is a fine example of this mood. But here is a little thing of Elizabethan temper that is perfectly lovely. It is called 'After Two Years':

"She is all so slight
And tender and white
As a May morning.
She walks without hood
At dusk. It is good
To hear her sing.

"It is God's will
That I shall love her still
As He loves Mary.
And night and day
I will go forth to pray
That she love me.

"She is as gold
Lovely, and far more cold.
Do thou pray with me,
For if I win grace
To kiss twice her face
God has done well to me."

"Don't spoil the effect of that," cried Jason when I finished reading. "I'll try to look at these Imagists with your eyes, and perhaps come to terms with what they have attempted. I have

done my duty, as I presume Psyche and Cassandra have, in carefully reading their poems, and my tolerance has a more amiable mood after your talk. But I insist this frame of mind depends, for the present, upon the feeling inspired by Mr. Aldington's lovely poem. I venture to speak for Psyche and Cassandra, too," Jason solicited their approval with a glance. "Besides," he added, "here is this 'Chicago Anthology,' which deserves attention before that shadow I've been watching spreads much further over the ground."

Psyche and Cassandra nodded acquiescence. "Oh, very well," I consented; "Miss Lowell and Mr. Fletcher we shall have ample opportunity to discuss at some other time. . . . Will you introduce the Chicagoans, Jason?" I prompted.

Before Jason could respond Cassandra began to read "The Jew to Jesus" (a poem the publisher forbids me to report).

Scarcely had the echo of Cassandra's voice died among the branches overhead, when Psyche's voice with thrilling ecstasy fell upon our ears with these words:

"Who drives the horses of the sun
Shall lord it but a day;
Better the lowly deed were done,
And kept the humble way.

"The rust will find the sword of fame,
The dust will hide the crown;
Ay, none shall nail so high his name
Time will not tear it down.

" The happiest heart that ever beat
Was in some quiet breast
That found the common daylight sweet
And left to Heaven the rest."

" One cannot resist such a cue," said Jason, " so here is my contribution," and he read:

" I am aware,
As I go commonly sweeping the stair,
Doing my part of the every-day care —
Human and simple my lot and my share —
I am aware of a marvelous thing:
Voices that murmur and ethers that ring
In the far stellar spaces where cherubim sing.
I am aware of the passion that pours
Down the channels of fire through Infinity's doors;
Forces terrific, with melody shod,
Music that mates with the pulses of God.
I am aware of the glory that runs
From the core of myself to the core of the suns.
Bound to the stars by invisible chains,
Blaze of eternity now in my veins,
Seeing the rush of ethereal rains
Here in the midst of the every-day air —
I am aware.

" I am aware,
As I sit quietly here in my chair,
Sewing or reading or braiding my hair —
Human and simple my lot and my share —
I am aware of the systems that swing
Through the aisles of creation on heavenly wing,
I am aware of a marvelous thing;
Trail of the comets in furious flight,

Thunders of beauty that shatter the night,
Terrible triumph of pageants that march
To the trumpets of time through Eternity's arch.
I am aware of the splendor that ties
All the things of the earth with the things of the skies,
Here in my body the heavenly heat,
Here in my flesh the melodious beat
Of the planets that circle Divinity's feet.
As I sit silently here in my chair,
I am aware."

"Florence Kiper Frank's 'The Jew to Jesus,' which Cassandra read, 'The Happiest Heart,' by John Vance Cheney, which Psyche read, and Angela Morgan's 'Kinship,' which you read, Jason," I enumerated, "are all very beautiful poems which I have long known and greatly admired; any anthology which contains them is a rich book, and shows the good taste and judgment of its editor."

"Mr. Blanden and Miss Mathison have performed an excellent task in this Chicago Anthology," said Jason. "As Mr. Llewellyn Jones remarks in his introduction, 'Its compilers have done the art of poetry and the poets of Chicago signal service in rescuing this representative collection from the oblivion that would have befallen some of it and the lack of general appreciation that would have befallen the best of it,' a sentiment to which we must all subscribe. New York, Boston, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and San Francisco, might well follow suit. I suppose there would be some difficulty in not enlisting the services of several

poets over and over again, unless I am mistaken about all these poets not being Chicago-born. If all these poets were born in Chicago, then the city is entitled to all that Miss Monroe claims for it as the poetic centre of America. But I doubt that they were, which after all makes very little difference, if the city has been, as Mr. Jones hints, a vital influence in their lives.

"There is one poet in Chicago who seems to me more typical," Jason continued, "of the West in the old manner, than a good many who are better known. She has carried over something from the New England spirit, which I can't exactly describe. But her verse appeals to me for its homely beauty and sincerity. She is E. Sewell Hill, and I want to read these lines on 'Coming Home,' with their full-flowing rhythm:

"They have hauled in the gang-plank; the breast line
crawls back;
It is 'Port, and hard over!' and out through the
black
Of the storm and the night, and across to the mouth
Of the harbor, where stretching far out to the south,
Run the lights of the town.

"Swinging slowly we turn,
Pointing out for mid-lake, past the long pier where
burn
The red harbor-lights, where the great billows
churn,
Blow on blow, on the spiles, spilling down the white
foam —

But I've written the home-folks that I'm coming home.

" And I'm coming; huddled close by the slow-falling rail,
Blinking red through the mist and the spray, while the hail
Rattles down the wet decks, lifting high, with the wail
Up the wind of the fog-horn, and behind on our trail,
And we nose straight out in the teeth of the gale,
I know by the throb that the engines prevail,
And — steady, my courage — unless the stars fail,
We'll make it.

" But tell me, O gray eyes and blue,
Did you know in your watching, O dim eyes and true,
In that black night's wild fury, while the storm-signals flew,
While the storm beat us back, and the hoarse whistles blew —
Did you know, O my dear ones, I was coming to you?

" The silence of midnight; the hiss of the swell;
The creaking of timbers; the close cabin smell;
The slow-swaying shadows; the jar of the screw;
The wind at the shutter; the feet of the crew;
The cry of a child — is he coming home, too?

" There's a rent in the night, and a star glimmers through.

The skies clear above us; the west banks up brown;
The wind dies across us; the sea's running down;
And across the dim water, still breaking in foam,
Stretches out the far shore-line — and I'm coming
home.

" The hills smile a welcome, the long night is past,
And the ship's turning into the harbor at last.
The engines slow down; we steal through the slip,
Past the low-burning lamp and with quivering lip,
Call down to the life-savers, cheering us on.

" The weary throb sends us straight into the dawn,
Fair and white up the bay, half asleep, all adream,
In its translucent purple and pearl. Just a gleam
Out there of the earliest sail; here the curl
Of the first lazy smoke from a cabin — a girl
Loops up the long vines at the doorway. A swirl
Of white water behind us; then a stir at the dock.
Steam slowly! The head-line — the stern-line —
the shock
As we swing alongside, and across the plank flock
Wan faces, with breath still a-quiver, the roar
Of the night still above and about them, the floor
Still uncertain; but over the grateful brown loam
We crowd to the shore-boat — and I'm coming
home.

" And away to the north, over depths of cool green
From the bluffs overhead, where the deep-set ravine
Digs down to the heart of the wood, while a stream
Trickles out over sands drifting white and the pier
Reaches out through the water to meet us. We're
here!

"From the pier to the boat-house and far down the shore
Flutters back to the group at the old farm-house door
The word that I'm coming: and from wrinkled old hands,
As the dear old feet toil through the weary white sands,
Bringing welcome and welcome, from boat-house and strand,
The hurrying, white-winged signals all come —
God pity the mortal who has never come home.

"And I? I'm not worth it. But gray eyes and blue!
While the storms beat about me, O dear hearts and true!
Or the fogs flinging far, blot the stars from the blue,
If the pole star leads on or the rudder swings true,
It's not heaven I'm after — I'm coming to you.

"But heaven it will be when down the blue dome
Flutter out the white signals that I'm coming home."

When Jason finished reading we sat silent for awhile. The sun was still high in the west, but the screen of the woods made all about us dim with shadows. The birds overhead in the leaves were piping soft and sweet; it was the beginning of vespers. As if charmed, we listened and dreamed. Psyche was the first to break the spell. She arose from her seat on the ground. "What is it in such a poem as that, homely, plain, about an ordinary event, which makes one feel a deep and

satisfying sense of poetry?" she asked, as if expecting the air to answer.

"It is something we all come back to from the crocheting of art," Jason volunteered to explain. "The simple human quality of it. Its lack of pretensions of any kind; its common impulse. It is the poetry of Mr. Cheney's

> "The happiest heart that ever beat
> Was in some quiet breast
> That found the common daylight sweet
> And left to heaven the rest —"

he said, as we started for The Farm.

VI

CLOTHO, LACHESIS, ATROPOS & CO.

The day was brilliant, and Jason came up to The Farm with an air of assurance about him which was interesting to watch as he swung across the fields. I had arrived earlier, and with Psyche and Cassandra had walked down to the river behind The Farm. We returned in time to see Jason get off the car. Usually he moved along as if he expected the earth to stop spinning, and if that miraculous disaster were to happen, he wished to break the shock as much as possible by the resiliency of his body. "It could do nothing more than throw me flat where I stood," he used to say; "and there I could perish comfortably from inanition. You people who walk with a stiff spine will not only have your spines broken but will be thrown as from a catapult into space like the devil and his angels, without the comfortable assurance of landing into the sovereignty of another hell." And so with his fine figure he came perilously near to shuffling about. Jason was an extraordinary fellow in many ways, and I always believed that this manner was simply one of his self-indulgences. Almost any time I anticipated a new aspect of the man as startling as it was sudden. And here he

was beating his way across the field, swinging his stick with the vigor and glow of a young god. We awaited him in front of the house; as he crossed the road from the field, I began to read in a loud voice, these lines,

> "The man Flammonde, from God knows where,
> With firm address and foreign air,
> With news of nations in his talk
> And something royal in his walk,
> With glint of iron in his eyes,
> But never doubt, nor yet surprise,
> Appeared, and stayed, and held his head
> As one by kings accredited."

"A fine compliment," Jason acknowledged, with a stately bow which was meant for a greeting as well. "Robinson could describe a man, eh?" he added.

"Oh, many men and many kinds," I amended. "But come, luncheon is ready, and dear Mrs. Dan has a prodigious supply of delicious gems."

"Yes," called Mrs. Dan from the porch; "and if you don't come quick they will be cold."

So we went in to lunch still quite mystified as to the cause of Jason's new aspect.

It was when we entered the woods an hour later that the secret began to clear up. No sooner had we got under the leaves than Janson pulled a small red book from his pocket and began to read. And these are the verses:

> "Where a faint light shines alone,
> Dwells a Demon I have known.

Most of you had better say
'The Dark House,' and go your way.
Do not wonder if I stay.

"For I know the Demon's eyes,
And their lure that never dies.
Banish all your fond alarms,
For I know the foiling charms
Of her eyes and of her arms,

"And I know that in one room
Burns a lamp as in a tomb;
And I see the shadow glide,
Back and forth, of one denied
Power to find himself outside.

"There he is who is my friend,
Damned, he fancies, to the end —
Vanquished, ever since a door
Closed, he thought, for evermore
On the life that was before.

"And the friend who knows him best
Sees him as he sees the rest
Who are striving to be wise
While a Demon's arms and eyes
Hold them as a web would flies.

"All the words of all the world,
Aimed together and then hurled,
Would be stiller in his ears
Than a closing of still shears
On a thread made out of years.

"But there lives another sound,
More compelling, more profound;

There's a music, so it seems,
That assuages and redeems,
More than reason, more than dreams.

" There's a music yet unheard
By the creature of the word,
Though it matters little more
Than a wave-wash on a shore —
Till a Demon shuts a door.

" So, if he be very still
With his Demon, and one will,
Murmurs of it may be blown
To my friend who is alone
In a room that I have known.

" After that from everywhere
Singing life will find him there;
Then the door will open wide,
And my friend, again outside,
Will be living, having died."

The effect of Jason's voice was indescribable as he let these words fall upon the air as we sauntered among the trees to our familiar spot. The last line with lingering, tragic effect, came just as we stopped. You have seen a proud and high-spirited horse throw up its head, in the exultation of strength and speed? I got such an image of Jason when he finished reading. But I had scarcely completed my visualization, when the man confounded me with the remark, " That poem has made a man of me."

It was a perfectly silly admission, unless there

was a concealed something in the man that was a menace to decency, and we knew him too well to believe any such thing. We all live in a "dark house" at some time or other, but very few are haunted. If all the "dark houses" of human lives were haunted, the world would be a nightmare. Jason's remark, therefore, was inexplicable, until he explained: "I have had little time," he said, "during the past week to read and study the poets who are to be our company to-day. Mother wired me urgently to go down to Newport and see her. When I arrived I discovered it was a serious matter which threatened to damage my future. If Byron woke up of a morning to find himself famous, I woke up to find myself beating against rocks. For the rest of the week I completely forgot about the poets. Unable to stand it any longer, yesterday morning I came up to town and made a tour of all the ancient burying grounds in Boston. I awoke this morning out of a nasty dream — which served me right for trying to memorize all the inscriptions on the antique tombs in Puritanic Boston — and found myself muttering something about 'life being a great maze.' 'By Jove,' I cried, 'that's the title of Hagedorn's poem.' I jumped out of bed and read the book before breakfast. After which I had a bit of errand to do, which made me late for the train. I tackled Robinson's book in the station, and finished it on the way up. With the week I had passed through dominating every nerve in me, these poems of Robinson's made me see myself as the 'man

against the sky,' and I came to the conclusion that we are in this world to do business for the little old firm of 'Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos & Co.' But you can't do a successful business with life unless you have a sense of humor. By George, it sets a man up," Jason concluded, on a radiant note of conviction.

"So that's the moral of your 'firm address' and 'foreign air,' of your appearing as one by 'kings accredited,'" Cassandra exclaimed.

I gave Cassandra a nod of approval. "Yes; this poet has taught him that whatever happens it is a confession of weakness to be afraid, a sign, in truth, of defeat, to be intimidated by whatever fate imposes; but to accept it with a sense of humor is to grow strong in the contention which strives to overcome the circumstance. I remember a remark this poet once made which is the armor of human sanity. 'You will be surprised,' he said, 'when you look back, on the number of difficulties you get through without knowing how. They seemed unbearable at the time, but your only expense proves to be a waste of energy caused by worry.' The point of his philosophy is, accept what comes; if you go down, why it was intended anyway, and to go down with a brave indifference is to triumph spiritually; if the thing passes, why you're all the stronger and wiser for the experience. Your sense of humor *is* in strictly conforming to this doctrine."

"Why, it's the gospel of fatalism," asserted Psyche.

"Yes; but isn't it a good doctrine for the preservation of human sanity?" asked Jason. "If we will properly understand Mr. Robinson's poetry, his message is to impress this fact upon us. In the remarkable poem 'The Man Against the Sky,' he deals with it in a lofty manner. Here is shown the aspirations of humanity to achieve through the individual its high destiny. Unlike the belief of many of his critics, the poet *does* conceive a high destiny for mankind. The significance, however, of his utterance is his clear perception of the processes by which this destiny works in man for good or evil. He gives us then, a commentary on the means and ideals, the checks and limitations of traditions, with bold reliance upon the prophetic orientations of the spirit. We see the poet emphasizing that central, inevitable fact, which shadows the destiny of mankind. Over and over again, he faces this inescapable future, with clear and unperturbed recognition; and in dissecting the experiences of human life, he lifts the appalling oppressiveness of its truth, by a cleansing sense of humor. So when he sings, in this poem,

> "And when the primitive old-fashioned stars
> Came out again to shine on joys and wars
> More primitive, and all arrayed for doom,
> He may have proved a world a sorry thing
> In his imagining,
> And life a lighted highway to the tomb —

he can also speculate, with creditable conviction,

> " . . . why one man in five
> Should have a care to stay alive.

" What does your shallow mind say to such an assertion? He cries pessimist, fatalist, and so forth. He is generally the fifth man who wonders why he should stand the knocks of this 'unintelligible world.' To such a one — and the Lord knows there are plenty, as the poet hints — Mr. Robinson comes with a reassuring wisdom and humor, and sings,

> " Where was he going, this man against the sky?
> You know not, nor do I.
> But this we know, if we know anything:
> That we may laugh and fight and sing
> And of our transience here make offering
> To an orient Word that will not be erased,
> Or, save in incommunicable gleams
> Too permanent for dreams,
> Be found or known.
> No tonic and ambitious irritant
> Of increase or of want
> Has made an otherwise insensate waste
> Of ages overthrown
> A ruthless, veiled, implacable foretaste
> Of other ages that are still to be
> Depleted and rewarded variously
> Because a few, by fate's economy,
> Shall seem to move the world the way it goes;
> No soft evangel of equality,
> Safe-cradled in a communal repose
> That huddles into death and may at last
> Be covered well with equatorial snows —
> And all for what, the devil only knows.

Yes, ' all for what, the devil only knows!' That's the humor of the situation.

" But this is not a pessimist's view, nor a cynic's, nor a satiric's view of life," Jason continued. " It is a fatalist's only so far as one seeks to understand the forces which hold and exercise a mysterious influence upon the brief and uncertain indentity of human life. Mr. Robinson is a poet absolutely alone in our literature, who makes that fact a starting point in the attainment of the wisdom which puts the secrets and mysteries of humanity at his disposal. In the poem ' Bokardo,' he makes this point more explicit:

" God knows there are lives enough,
Crushed, and too far gone
Longer to make sermons of,
And those we leave alone.
Others, if they will, may rend
The worn patience of a friend
Who, though smiling, sees the end,
With nothing done.

" But your fervor to be free
Fled the faith it scorned;
Death demands a decency
Of you, and you are warned.
But for all we give we get
Mostly blows? Don't be upset;
You, Bokardo, are not yet
Consumed or mourned.

" There'll be falling into view
Much to rearrange;

> And there'll be a time for you
> To marvel at the change.
> They that have the least to fear
> Question hardest what is here;
> When long-hidden skies are clear,
> The stars look strange.

These lines apply literally to the poet's own attitude toward life, to his calm and settled conviction that, having acknowledged, fully taken into account, the inevitable end, and the unknowableness of what follows it, is to get rid of fear and to increase one's powers in questioning and solving the riddles of this world."

"It's like having a faith in something you don't understand," suggested Psyche. "Comprehending the incomprehensible, Mr. Robinson has the knack of pelting you with simple words and phrases till you're dazed. His 'what was he, and what was he not,' 'and he knows neither what nor when,' 'of many out of many more,' and 'you are one of us,' these severe, naked phrases greet you everywhere, and yet in their context they have a meaning that shines with significance. I always feel when I come to them that a vista has opened: the soul of Flammonde, the man with 'news of nations in his talk.'"

"That's just it," I joined in, "a vista is opened, but it is not always likely to be full of sunshine. That doesn't matter so long as you see the end; the important thing is to be able to see through. But to see life steadily, and see it whole is only a partial realization of Mr. Robinson's

powers as a poet. He sees it transparently. That fatalistic note which many professed to detect in his work, that inscrutable and inexplicable symbolism which baffles by its simplicity of expression rather than meaning, is really nothing more than an overwhelming conviction of what this life presents in its uncompromising wholeness and clarity. The irresistible force of this poet's power to bring life into a kind of realization with our misconception of it, is both a part of his charm and his finality of vision. Precisely what his poetry does, is to manifest the working of fate. There is a magic in his manner of doing this which we may credit to art, to the very conscious structure of his language, but all this substance would crumble and vanish, if something more eternal did not give it life. The living vision of the human soul is the vision whose light is in the intellect. Mr. Robinson's heart is full of mystery, but in his head is a passionate wisdom of understanding. His poems are absolutely bare of illusion; intuition goes upon no foraging errands for his moods and sympathies. What his heart gathers must pass through the clearing-house of his intellect."

"Yes," broke in Jason. "And when he says of Shakespeare,

"He knows how much of what men paint themselves
Would blister in the light of what they are;
He sees how much of what was great now shares
An eminence transformed and ordinary;
He knows too much of what the world has hushed
In others, to be loud now for himself;

He knows now at what height low enemies
May reach his heart, and high friends let him fall;
But what not even such as he may know
Bedevils him the worst: his lark may sing
At heaven's gate how he will, and for as long
As joy may listen; but *he* sees no gate,
Save one whereat the spent clay waits a little
Before the churchyard has it, and the worm —

he shows the supremest understanding of the world's greatest mind. The poem from which I quote these lines, 'Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford,' is the finest utterance on Shakespeare. The man who has best understood the character of that mind which most encompassed human nature, we must crown with the laurel of genius."

Psyche had been sitting with her book open, and I suspected she had a selection she wanted to read. "Have you something of Mr. Robinson's you wish to read?" I asked her.

"Yes," she answered. "A poem which I think is the most beautiful in this book. Its magic is haunting." And she read these stanzas called "Fragment":

"Faint white pillars that seem to fade
As you look from here are the first one sees
Of his house where it hides and dies in a shade
Of beeches and oaks and hickory trees.
Now many a man, given woods like these,
And a house like that, and the Briony gold,
Would have said, 'There are still some gods to please,
And houses are built without hands, we're told.'

"There are the pillars, and all gone gray.
Briony's hair went white. You may see
Where the garden was if you come this way.
That sun-dial scared him, he said to me;
'Sooner or later they strike,' said he,
And he never got that from the books he read.
Others are flourishing, worse than he,
But he knew too much for the life he led.

"And who knows all knows everything
That a patient ghost at last retrieves;
There's more to be known of his harvesting
When Time the thresher unbinds the sheaves;
And there's more to be heard than a wind that grieves
For Briony now in this ageless oak,
Driving the first of its withered leaves
Over the stones where the fountain broke.

"One absorbs that, and it isn't necessary to say just what one absorbs with it," Psyche commented, after her reading.

"You are quite right, Psyche," I agreed. "The thought moves me to a generalization which might be more considered to-day than it is.

"Whoever tries to make us think that Beauty has lost her memory for old things, old stories, and old traditions, knows her only through acquaintance and not friendship. Beauty, like Truth, cares neither for time nor locality; her passion burns as intensely in luxury as in poverty. She has no age, and custom takes no bloom from her eternal youth. If beauty could see what we sometimes make of her image in the mirror of modern

life, she would hardly recognize the countenance which dreams have painted as her living form. And where she might have hoped to look and find her image men painted centuries ago, she will find nothing but a faded canvas. But all these misrepresentations do not disturb her spirit. She knows that, since there are false gods, there also must be false dreams. The grace of antiquity may crumble to dust; the glamor of remoteness be as a dull light; romance swollen to inertia: from which the desire of her spirit has vanished. Our world of to-day, with its literalness of mood and feature, will be as dead as they, if the breath of this desire and spirit is not breathed into them at birth.

"Your modernist will protest that the gods are dead. Long live the factory and democracy they cry, this is body for the spirit of beauty and truth. But the gods were never more than symbols and oracles. The factory and democracy are no more than symbols and oracles to-day. Behind both these ancient and modern temples, is the soul of man. It alone makes life, and only where life is passionate, does the mystery of beauty and the secret of truth dwell. The merchandize of Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos & Co. is in the emporium of the human soul. Some poets are ever conscious of the wares bought and sold there. Mr. Robinson is one of these poets who knows the stock through and through. Mr. Hagedorn has been less familiar with the stocks of destiny. He never gave us the impression of

unweaving the obscure circumstances of life; that is why we are all the more surprised at the handling of such a theme in the Homeric substance of 'The Great Maze.'

"The spell of the three sisters is working upon the poet's mind in the creation of this poem. And beauty testifies to the truth of it. It is not merely because Mr. Hagedorn tells the story of a king and queen in Argos, two thousand and more years ago; of an episode in the golden and supreme story of antiquity; but because he makes that story true to his vision of fate. He has the kind of wisdom which understands human nature acting and reacting under the circumstances in which Agamemnon and Clytæmnestra are placed. Does he not tell us how Agamemnon, returning from Troy after his ten years' absence, which his wife was made to believe would only be three months, sat watching her perplexed face, while his eyes,

"Sought Clytæmnestra's but his gaze
Stood suppliant in vain at those dark doors.
Once he had entered and been welcomed there
To sunny chambers odorous with winds
Murmuring garden-magic and sea-lore
Through open casements. Dimly he recalled
Lost tricks of her lost girlhood, April moods
Of swanlike queenliness afloat on dreams.
Deep words that sank in sparkling silences,
And evanescent angers and sharp thrusts,
Cruel, but for the swift, requiting lips.
All that was dead as Troy.

And does not the poet also tell us that, for all his taking of cities — the inexcusable cause to the wife of the husband's ten years' absence — Agamemnon was only a child because he could not know life as Clytæmnestra did? She, who brought forth Electra in his absence and who gave Iphigenia for the sacrifice at Aulis! The cry of this queen's heart is louder than all the noise of the sacking of Troy. Troy falling in ruins fell to silence. The agony of spirit in Clytæmnestra rises from the ruins of time with louder and louder echoes. Hear the poet's voice at this great moment:

" She stared at him
A long, slow minute. On his bearded face
The light of stars shone faintly, where he stood
Erect and kingly, looming large and grand
In that strange childlikeness her arrows sped
Against in vain. She saw each fiery shaft,
Swift, stern and straight, fly to its mortal mark,
And marvelled, seeing how it struck, and lo,
Sprang back and fell, made impotent by some
Unearthly armor, proof against her skill.
She gazed at him with cool, straight, thoughtful
gaze.

' If only you were bad at heart,' she said,
' I might find words to make your soul ashamed
Of the bleak, windy ruin you have made.
But, no. You are not bad. You are a child.
You play your games and break so many things
Unchidden, that at last when you destroy
A priceless vase, you cannot comprehend

Why there are tears nor wherein lies the wrong.
If you were bad, if you had devious ways,
If you were not a good man, with clear eyes,
Seeing one road and that road white and straight;
If you had any shadows in your soul
For plots to brew in and black hates be born,
You might suspect that in this world all ways
Are not straight ways or clear ways, and that souls
Are like deep woods, dark and mysterious
Even at noonday. You are blind to men,
Blind to their powers, their feeblenesses, blind
To the ten thousand tricks life lightly plays
With souls and with events. You did not dream
That when you battered Troy and burnt its towers
There was another city, not of stone,
That shook beneath your onslaughts. It withstood
A long, long while, and then at last it fell.
The wind is whistling in the ruins now,
Crying strange things you cannot understand.'
Her voice was steady, cold and grave, and sad
As is the sea's, when it is most serene.
It made the throat of Agamemnon beat
And choked the words that struggled like strong men
Entombed, upward, for air and utterance,
And strove in vain. But Clytæmnestra turned
Moodily toward the sea her calm, dark eyes,
That were themselves immeasurable seas
Peopled with exquisite arrows of white light
And terrors tentacled; and spoke once more.
'Because you are not bad at heart, I hope
That you will never know what you have done
To me and to my life. Good night. Go now.
Go, Agamemnon!'"

"That is beautiful poetry," exclaimed Cassandra.

Psyche and Jason echoed the thought.

"Yes; but how its beauty would fade if it did not clothe the substance of life. This the poet gives in the crux of fate to which he submits the lives of this king and queen. Thus the poem moves towards catastrophe. Agamemnon is convinced through a discovery, not long after his return from Troy, that Clytæmnestra's bitterness was not due to his long absence, but that her love for Ægisthus had made his return undesirable. Electra's prattling in the garden awakened suspicion. But Agamemnon's love for Clytæmnestra was so great that he was willing to forgive if only he could win her back. He goes to her room late one night, crying,

"Where are you hiding, Clytæmnestra? Speak.
I have not come to blame you. I who love you,
And did you grievous wrong, how should I blame you?
Life is a great maze, Clytæmnestra. You
And I were lost in it awhile. But look,
Love is the thread of it, love is the key.
We shall not walk in mazes any more.
Speak to me! Come to me!

and she answered,

"'Agamemnon!'

and

She staggered toward him with wide arms.

"It is the leading out of this 'great maze of life,' by following the 'thread of love,' that fate steps in and makes a good intention a sad tragedy. In Agamemnon's absence bitterness made Clytæmnestra fancy she loved Ægisthus; but when her husband came back from Troy she realized her self-delusion: in every quality Ægisthus was mean in comparison. Mr. Hagedorn has been charitable with Clytæmnestra's character and purpose in the light of the Homeric conception. He absolves her of murdering Agamemnon. Refusing to run away with Ægisthus, she tells him the truth about her feelings for him in these lines:

"I never loved you. You are nothing to me.
You were the drug to make my sick brain cease
Ravelling and unravelling forever
A golden yarn. You were the knife I chose
To cut the living canker from my heart.
You failed, you failed. You left the canker there.
You were not even a good tool, Ægisthus."

"This young American poet takes liberty with Homer, I see," charged Cassandra. "The pitiless murderess becomes the pitied victim of her children's misguided revenge. Should we like this new Clytæmnestra, I wonder?"

"I do," Psyche instantly declared.

"Homer has had his day with her," Jason expressed his view, "and I see no harm in Mr. Hagedorn having his — only with such a predecessor his task is harder. There will be readers to condemn him to failure without the benefit of

a reading. This is the injustice which veneration for the dead masters of art impose upon the modern writer who treat old stories and characters from a new point of view. Mr. Hagedorn has made his Clytæmnestra very human and appealing; and his conception of her relations to Agamemnon and Ægisthus convincingly plausible."

"As he conceives her," I said, "it would be impossible for her to murder Agamemnon, or to connive his death with Ægisthus. It was jealous rage on the part of the disappointed lover which drove him to do the deed. I have read the passage where Agamemnon entered Clytæmnestra's room late one night to speak his forgiveness and love. It was also the time and place when Ægisthus urged the queen to fly with him, eliciting from her that scornful denunciation which I have also quoted. Fate has set the scene for the tragedy —'One room enclosed the three of them at last.' Unable to resist Agamemnon's appeal, the queen 'staggered toward him with wide arms'— but let the poet tell what happened:

> "A hand
> Thrust her aside, a thin and icy hand
> Thrust her among her tables and her chairs,
> Her combs and broken vases, thrust her back,
> And gave the breast of Agamemnon not
> A woman, but a sword.
> "He cried, he reeled,
> He fell, thrashing, he rose, he fell. The sword
> Shook itself loose and on the marble floor
> Fell clattering. He fought for breath, he choked,

Trying to speak, and then reproachfully
He moaned her name, and then 'Why?' And again,
More faintly, 'Why? Why?' On his breath, the word
Hung, tremulously fading. When it died,
He went with it into the windy night.

"From somewhere in the world there came a cry,
Then steps and other cries, Electra's voice,
And other voices out of every day,
Steps hurrying!

"Across the littered floor
Blindly, toward where he lay and made no sound
In the chill blackness, Clytæmnestra drew
Her bruised and fainting body, reaching out
Quivering fingers, seeking him, and crying,
'Where are you, oh, where are you?' in low tones,
Inhuman as the wind. She lost her way,
And fell amid the shards of Tyrian glass
His hand had scattered there, and raised herself
And struggled on with bleeding body and face,
Groping through the enormous emptiness
To find a fallen king. She found a sword;
And then she found his hand across the sword,
His open eyes, his bleeding breast, his feet.
She moaned, and kissed his feet and kissed his feet.
Ægisthus staggered wildly to the window
And tore the curtain down. The moonlight fell
Whitely on Clytæmnestra where she knelt.
He stared, gasping, 'Why? — Why? — Why? —'"

"Why?" repeated Psyche. "Does Clotho, Lachesis or Atropos ever answer?"

"No," Jason replied. "And we will go on asking them to the end."

"No one can doubt that Mr. Hagedorn has arrived with this poem," I observed, as we prepared to return to The Farm. "It's a beautiful achievement."

VII

SELLING ALADDIN'S LAMP

"The lives of some people subsist upon untasted delights — to be prosaic I ought to say, unrealized hopes; but that wouldn't be exactly truthful because hopes are seldom realized; it is the disillusion that becomes a fact. Expectation is the most nourishing of human emotions; it has the form of desire, and instinct is its substance. A man labors and sacrifices all a life-time to save a few dollars to buy a useless article, and has to spend the money for some vital need; a woman will want a jewel or a house, and will have the money to obtain both, but the first will not be of the right design nor the second in the right locality to satisfy her desire and her social vanity,— and life is frustrated; and so on. Well, you know about Henry James' schoolteacher and Edgar Lee Masters' village cosmopolite, who dreamed of Europe. Carcassonne may be any old place or any old thing in the life of a man or woman, and the expectation of it is the strength upon which they live. 'I am looking forward to the time,' says the king on his throne: 'I am looking forward to the time,' says the beggar in the streets: 'I am looking forward to the

time,' says the average citizen; the king to the time of sacking a rival capital or adding a colony to his dominions, the beggar to the time when he eats a square meal and wears a silk hat, the average citizen to the time when he has saved enough money to buy a little pleasure — to see a bit of the world beyond the prison-house of his duties, to wear a few decent clothes, and own a full-jewelled watch of whose ironic warning he takes no heed. And so the king, the beggar and the average citizen live on the future. The king rules successfully, the beggar does not starve, the average citizen supports his family comfortably: each in his sphere doing the day's work, with his hopes upon a trifle which Time dangles before his dreams; and king, beggar and average citizen go to sleep for the last time with these trifles growing brighter and nearer in the fading gloom, confident that . . . in the dawn *they will seize them.*"

Jason delivered himself of these thoughts as we walked up the Derry Road in the shadow of the trees. What inspired the train of thoughts none of us could guess, and he offered no explanation by the way of a prelude. When he had finished neither of the girls nor myself made any comment. There were still some steps to go before reaching the grove, and we completed the distance in silence. By the time we were comfortably settled, he had apparently forgotten the outburst. He picked up a twig and playfully tossed it at Cassandra, and laughed when it lodged in her hair. " I don't know why," he said,

"the simple act of throwing that twig reminded me of Lord Dunsany's tale of 'A Legend of Dawn.' The mind has queer associations; it is a region where mysteries come up from remote corners of emotions and cross like swift meteors. But that instance Inzana came to view radiant and flushed from tossing her golden ball. I have always remembered the opening of that legend: 'When the world and All began and the gods were stern and old They saw the Beginning from under eyebrows hoar with years, all but Inzana, Their Child, who played with the golden ball. Inzana was the child of the gods. And the law before the Beginning and thereafter was that all should obey the gods, yet hither and thither went all Pegana's gods to obey the Dawnchild because she loved to be obeyed. It was dark all over the world and even in Pegana, where dwell the gods, it was dark when the child Inzana, the Dawn, first found her golden ball. Then running down the stairway of the gods with tripping feet, chalcedony, onyx, chalcedony, onyx, step by step, she cast her golden ball across the sky. The golden ball went bounding up the sky, and the Dawnchild with her flaring hair stood laughing upon the stairway of the gods, and it was day. So gleaming fields below saw the first day of all the days that the gods have destined. But towards evening certain mountains, afar and aloof, conspired together to stand between the world and the golden ball and to wrap their crags about it and to shut it from the world, and all the world was

darkened with their plot. And the Dawnchild up in Pegana cried for her golden ball. Then all the gods came down the stairway right to Pegana's gate to see what ailed the Dawnchild and to ask her why she cried. Then Inzana said that her golden ball had been taken away and hidden by mountains black and ugly, far away from Pegana, all in a world of rocks under the rim of the sky, and she wanted her golden ball and could not love the dark.' And Lord Dunsany goes on to say how the gods found the golden ball for Inzana; but she in her perverse childishness kept throwing the ball and losing it behind the crags of the dark mountains. Every time this happened Inzana would call the gods and say, 'The Night hath seized my golden ball,' and they would go in search of it again. 'But some day,' writes the dreamer, 'the Night shall seize the golden ball and carry it away and drag it down to its lair, and Slid shall dive from the Threshold into the sea to see if it be there, and coming up when the fishermen draw their nets shall find it not, nor yet discover it among the sails. Limpang Tung shall seek among the birds and shall not find it when the cock is mute, and up the valleys shall go Unborodom to seek among the crags. And the hound, the thunder, shall chase the Eclipse and all the gods go seeking with Their stars, but never find the ball. And men, no longer having light of the golden ball, shall pray to the gods no more, who, having no worship, shall be no more the gods.'"

"I have never read your Lord Dunsany," Psyche said, "but it is certain he has never sold Aladdin's lamp."

Jason sprang, as it were, to the phrase. "That's it," he said, "selling Aladdin's lamp! That's what some of these modern poets are doing."

I began to understand,— and I think both Psyche and Cassandra accompanied my turn of thought, because of a subtle recognition come into their faces,— the hidden significance of Jason's talk on the way up to the grove. That talk was the reflex action of the mind on the poetry of Mr. Masters and Mr. Aiken. The whole thing was quite clear to me now. These poets had sold Aladdin's lamp.

"You see," he went on, picking up the thread of suspended thought, "it's a vastly different thing from the 'selling your birthright for a mess of pottage' idea. It's different for many reasons. Every poet has a birthright, it is true, and he may sell it, if he choose, for a mess of pottage, but it is a poor bargain for the younger son. Now with Aladdin's lamp, being a poet is no proof of possession. It comes with the package of dreams which very few poets receive at birth from the fairy-godmother of Wonder. So when the poet sells his lamp the fairy-godmother of Wonder grows angry, and substitutes for it the terrible gift of disillusion."

"But don't poets in every age sell their Aladdin's lamp?" asked Cassandra.

"Yes; I suppose they do," replied Jason. "But the fairy-godmother of Wonder has not, except in two cases that I recall, been so hard with her punishment. She has given them for the most part only an excess of curiosity."

"Who are the two poets you recall?" Psyche asked.

"Crabbe and Beddoes," answered Jason. "And Crabbe," he went on to explain, "is the father of our modern disillusionists. An important essay remains to be written on the influence of George Crabbe on contemporary American poets. Edwin Arlington Robinson was the first to feel his influence; he wrote a sonnet acknowledging his admiration for the author of 'The Village Register,' and 'Tales of the Hall.' In his sonnet Mr. Robinson has acknowledged the debt contemporary poetry owes to Crabbe. Mr. Masefield in spite of his obligation to Chaucer, owes much to Crabbe; and in Gibson, Masters, and even Frost, the poet's influence and manner can be traced though it is unconscious in the last three poets named."

"And have all these poets, Mr. Robinson included, sold their Aladdin's lamp?" asked Psyche.

"I wouldn't say that Mr. Robinson has," Jason answered, "nor Masefield, Gibson and Frost. And I am of this opinion because these poets have had no illusion about life, to begin with. They developed from a potential recognition of facts, and as they grew in experience, they became less concerned with reality than with the effort to coax

it into a proper and rational relation with human instincts. Aladdin's lamp was the secret of their knowledge."

"Then Mr. Aiken and Mr. Masters are the principal tradesmen of imaginative wares?" I asked.

"They seemed so to me," replied Jason, "because they have deliberately taken their imagination, de-affinitized it of mystery, and made life a solution of acids."

"What a thought!" exclaimed Psyche.

"Well, let me apply a simpler definition," requested Jason. "Watts-Dunton said that 'Poetry is apparent pictures of unapparent realities.' Now here you find these two poets giving us apparent realities in unapparent pictures."

Psyche confessed she didn't quite understand what Jason meant. "Unless," she suggested, "you can distinguish between the thing seen and the manner of the poet seeing it."

"Perhaps I can make the matter clearer by giving you Arthur Symons' comment on Watts-Dunton's definition," Jason turned a light on the difficulty. "He says, 'Now the important thing is, not that there should be realities which are unapparent, but that the things which are unapparent, of which the poet gives apparent pictures, should be realities. To the great imaginative poet they are; and that, not his "wonder" at them, is what matters. There is much, in the romantic attitude, of mere wonder; but what in Cyril Tourneur remains wonder, mere angry wonder, becomes in

Shakespeare a divine certainty. Imagination, if there is any such thing, is sight, not wonder; a thing seen, not an opening of the eyes to see it. The great poets, the great visionaries, have always seen clearly; when they have seen furthest, as with Dante when he saw heaven and hell, they have seen without wonder.' Now, don't you understand?" Jason asked. "These two poets are merely in the act of opening their eyes upon life, and upon their wonder is impressed the pictures that are seen. The somewhat dazed condition of the sight does not see clearly nor far; the pictures instead of supplying a background, crowd up and shut out the realities. The danger to the imagination is in regarding the pictures as the important facts. While truth is hidden behind the form of the pictures. And it cannot be reached unless mystery rends those forms for imagination to flow through and light up the unapparent realities."

"Oh, I begin to see," exclaimed Psyche. "And when you say that these poets have sold Aladdin's lamp, you mean they dispense with mystery, which they believe is apt to falsify truth and fact. So their purpose is to open their eyes upon life and paint it literally in a mood of wonder."

"Doesn't it all come to the same thing," I suggested, "when Mr. Firkins, writing about Mr. Aiken's 'Turns and Movies,' says: 'He imagines that because the neighborhood of certain

ideas is mighty, their presence will be irresistible, whereas in these matters the expert knows that arrival is less potent than approach'?"

"'Arrival is less potent than approach,'" echoed Cassandra. "The mistake, you mean, that Mr. Aiken and Mr. Masters make in these books, is that they have arrived at the ultimate meaning of life because they present it literally. The potency, or I would rather say, the mystery, is all squeezed out. But you really can't reach an ultimate meaning of life, and one fails more signally in the attempt by the mere transcription of facts. The trouble is not that anything has been reached, but that the poet refuses to go further. To be constantly in a state of approach is to take the realities for granted, and invade the regions of mystery that lie hidden behind them."

"When Mr. Aiken published his first volume, 'Earth Triumphant,' I seemed to discover in the shorter poems of that volume, a certain philosophy of earth which appeared to me the poet's strongest note. There was an abstract something towards which he was groping, which no other present-day American poet had conceived. He seemed, as I said at the time, to have a share of that subtle penetration with which George Meredith unravelled the trinitarian spirit of nature and man's place in its workings. He showed in such lines as these from 'Earth Tedium,' a spiritual doctrine of very great poetic importance:

" If part of earth, I am a sullen part,
A note discordant in her harmony;
For I cry out against her ceaselessly,
And bear a separate music in my heart;
Or if in truth my soul was born of earth,
Most strange that being her offspring I should hate
Her who in anguish opened wide the gate
To blinding light of sun, the gate of birth!
Only in autumn do I feel with her;
As fall her leaves, so fall the leaves in me,
In borrowed splendor, dropping wearily,
Back to the dust wherefrom she bade them stir.

Here was the promise of something that lifted one into a fine symbolism. And I have no reason, in spite of the later tales in 'Turns and Movies,' to change my mind about his most individual and genuine note.

" The etchings of theatrical life," I continued, " which make up the material of 'Turns and Movies,'— powerful, incisive, sordid and acid as they are — is really not Mr. Aiken's métier. The poems have a kind of fascination, it is true, but it is the fascination of literature and not of life. The brutality, the vulgarisms, are, cunningly and even subtly, the result of a severe concentration of effort. But this concentration has misled the poet; the vaudeville stage has its disillusions, its sordid side, no doubt, but it is not a world solely of sin and crime. This is what Mr. Aiken makes it. His types of men and women are repulsive. They may be sharply individualized against the background he imagines; the delineations would

be remarkable if the background were true, but it is not. Thus 'Rose and Murray,' 'The McNeils,' 'Gabriel de Ford,' 'Violet Moore and Bert Moore,' and 'The Dancing Adairs,' are to a great degree falsified. They are conceived as Balzac conceived his duchesses of the Faubourg St. Germain. Here is one 'Bain's Cats and Rats,' which I shall read:

"Quiet, and almost bashful, and seldom looking
Into the rows of eyes below and above,
He went about his work as if alone;
His cats, upon their table, sat and yawned:
Or, paws curled under, blinked their sleepy eyes.
And one by one, with deft, pale hand, he lifted
Rats from a lidded box, and set each one
On a little pedestal. And then a cat,
Black, with green insolent eyes, gravely and sleekly
Stepped over them, and sniffed, and waved his tail,
And glared at the spotlight with his ears laid back,
And leapt back to the table. . . . The audience
laughed. . . .
Later, when one cat balked, he gave up weakly,
And let the curtain fall, with scant applause.

"Ten years before this he had lost his wife.
He was a trapeze artist: in his act,
While hanging from the trapeze by his legs,
Lifted the girl up in a jeweled girdle
Clenched in his teeth, and twirled her with his hands,
In darkness, with the spotlight blazing on them.
It was a love-match.— Many had envied them.
But he was always queer, a moody man,
And things got quickly on his nerves. The girl,

Perhaps, had been too young. . . . But anyway,
One night before his act they heard him scolding —
'For Christ's sake, put less powder on your arms!
Look at my clothes — look here!'— And that same night
He let her fall — or anyway, she fell,
And died without a word. Soon after that
He quit the trapeze work, and got these rats. . . .

"Sometimes there on the stage, he heard himself
Saying, until the words grew meaningless,
Multiplying themselves in tireless rhythms,
'I'm sick of her. But how get rid of her?
Why don't I let her fall? — She's killing me!'
And then he'd glance, half-scared, into the wings."

"Being very plausible, the thing still remains outside the consciousness of belief," commented Psyche.

"If that is true," I remarked, "what would you say of 'Zudora'? Such a type of woman is true, but I don't see the point of making her a special ornament of the vaudeville stage. Of these sketches, however, I believe it to be the best." And I read:

"Here on the pale beach, in the darkness;
With the full moon just to rise;
They sit alone, and look over the sea,
Or into each other's eyes. . . .

"She pokes her parasol into the sleepy sand,
Or sifts the lazy whiteness through her hand.

" ' A lovely night,' he says. ' The moon,
Comes up for you and me.
Just like a blind old spotlight there,
Fizzing across the sea! '

" She pays no heed, nor even turns her head:
He slides his arm around her waist instead.

" ' Why don't we do a sketch together? —
Those songs you sing are swell.
Where did you get them, anyway?
They suit you awfully well.'

" She will not turn to him — will not resist.
Impassive, she submits to being kissed.

" ' My husband wrote all four of them.
You know,— my husband drowned.
He was always sickly, soon depressed . . .'
But still she hears the sound

" Of a stateroom door shut hard, and footsteps going
Swiftly and steadily; and the dark sea flowing.

" She hears the cold sea flowing, and sees his eyes
Hollow with disenchantment, sick surprise,—

" And hate of her whom he had loved too well. . . .
She lowers her eyes, demurely prods a shell.

" ' Yes. We might do an act together.
That would be very nice.'
He kisses her passionately, and thinks
She's carnal, but cold as ice."

"What do I think of that?" spoke up Jason. "It strikes me as a mere *tour de force*. I don't say that such a couple and such a situation isn't a very probable bit of life, but the writer fails to make you realize its *livingness*, if I may say so. It's a mere statement of facts. Now poetry goes beyond that; it translates and transfigures facts. What the poet should have done in this case, was to make you feel that Zudora was 'carnal, but cold as ice,' without saying so in those sparkless words. A little rubbing of Aladdin's lamp would have done the trick."

"Does he ever turn the trick in this volume?" I asked.

"Pretty nearly in 'Discordants' and 'Disenchantment,' and completely, I should say, in the 'Evensong,'" replied Jason.

"I don't like the poet's color schemes," remarked Psyche. "His predilection for mauve is morbid."

"One can excuse that," I said, "if Mr. Aiken didn't resort to tricks of phrase and rhythm in which the labor of construction is too obvious. His poems show too often a lack of underbody of thought and emotion which he believes can be diverted by a multitude of words in which ecstasy is assumed rather than experienced. He is too often, I might say, the exclamatory poet. In his narrative poem, 'The Dance of Life,' he has ninety-two exclamation points, and addresses God with the rhetorical variants, 'ah,' 'good,' 'thank,' and 'by,' eleven times."

"Oh, when you fall into arithmetic, we had better pass on to Mr. Masters," Jason reproved us.

"What, you mean that Mr. Masters is a mathematical problem?" I rejoined.

"The economy of 'Spoon River Anthology' might warrant one in thinking so," Jason returned; "but I won't go so far as that. I stop somewhere between Froebel and the multiplication table."

"You had better return and explain what you mean by the 'economy of "Spoon River Anthology,"'" suggested Cassandra.

"Oh, that's simple enough," Jason informed her. "In that book Mr. Masters stripped life to the skin so completely that to comment on its reality is the *reductio ad absurdum* of truth. You see he saves you the mental cost of piercing illusion. That's something gained. With the balance of emotional energy on hand you can expend a good deal more of mental vigor in studying the citizenry of Spoon River. Now, here is where your mathematics comes in, if you will consider truth on that basis: Mr. Masters impresses you with the unit of life, Spoon River, a village of humble folk is the unit of New York, London, Paris; these cities are only the multiplications of Spoon River, when you get right down to the primal instincts of human nature. The only difference is the scale in which manifestation is pitched; the psychology is the same."

"And you agree with Jason?" Psyche addressed me.

"There is nothing to disagree with as far as Jason goes," I answered. "Mr. Masters is demonstrable by the tape-measure and that is why a good portion of the critical refuse to regard the work in the 'Spoon River Anthology' as poetry. But that book presented us with a problem," I went on, "that had not hitherto been given us to solve in the history of American poetry. Those of us who accepted its realism, its very poignant and very literal transcription of life, accepted the poetry which made the verse vivid and vital in the unusual and individual manner in which Mr. Masters chose to express himself. It could not have been so vivid and vital if poetry in its most abstract force had not been at the root of conception. The strength of the work was in the power which Mr. Masters possessed to conceal in his substance, just as life conceals in the individual, the intangible but no less formal quality of poetic form. This form is not to be measured by the standards commonly practised; but its effects were as definitely realized, because the sum of them registered upon the reader's mood and emotion, upon his sympathies and ideas, those same transforming spells which imagery and magic must work if formal metre in regular patterns, is to be transmuted from leaden verse to the vivid energy of poetry. He could not have won, by teasing or coercion, the secrets from those Spoon River histories if the key, to what was most deeply human and tragic, to the guarded and deceptive

experiences in the individual life where irony masquerades with pathetic simplicity, and the satiric dalliance of the gods with human flesh is mercilessly blind — was not a kind of poetic *open sesame*, the divination of a poetic instinct. What he revealed, and brought forth, would have wholly disintegrated in the attempt, if there had not been a cohesive quality of feeling working through the substance, shaping and coloring it through accumulative waves of rhythm and cadence to the pitch of poetry. The distinction of poetry, therefore, one cannot take away from the poems of the 'Spoon River Anthology.'"

"But isn't it true," asked Jason, "that the character of the poems in the 'Spoon River Anthology,' both in substance and form, was such that it would have been dangerous for Mr. Masters' reputation to repeat? It was only by the variety of his little humors of life and character that his book, with its two hundred-odd histories of condensed transcript, was saved from a possible monotony. Remarkable as the achievement is, fixed as it apparently seems to be among the small number of permanent contributions which the present day has added to American literature, we needed further evidence from Mr. Masters that he possessed the power, the substance and the art, to become a figure rather than a name in our literary history. On this account we looked eagerly to the appearance of a new book from him. And it is really through this new book, 'Songs and Sa-

tires,' that his position becomes critical, that he sustains or modifies our opinion of his ability and success."

"The Masters of 'Songs and Satires' will not hold our attention as he held it in the 'Spoon River Anthology,'" Cassandra gave as her opinion. "The reason is obvious," she amplified, "though it must not be counted against him, because it is largely, in fact wholly, the difference between reading a work with interrelated interests, reacting upon each other as in a novel, and a work of quite independent parts. The variety of the 'Spoon River Anthology' was all the more emphasized by its unity of setting and characters; it accumulated a great number of sketches into a narrative. The poet gave his critics a more difficult task in the new volume because they have got to judge him — why, not so much because of his various moods but by a miscellany of unthreaded realities. That is just what some have professed to see in the 'Spoon River Anthology.' But this point of view failed to note that it was the underlying narrative, the story web, which gave to the 'Anthology' its initial grip upon the imagination. It tells a history in which events are related through the portraiture of human character. The latter were only details, but they stood out so life-like and convincing, that they gave force and motion and dramatic substance to the chronicle. There was nothing that could be eliminated, no poem that did not somehow add its

significant phase to the poet's whole scheme of life in the community of Spoon River."

"But the poet's materials in 'Songs and Satires' are not essentially different from the materials of the 'Anthology,'" I said. "If we regard a certain aspect of life which it is not pleasant to bring to the gaze of the market-place, there is, in fact, no difference between the best poems in the 'Anthology' and the best poems in 'Songs and Satires.' They have that naked reality which we associate with the poet; desire in all its nudity; no reserve in treating the impulses of the flesh; the cynical, satiric, ironic, pathetic, inexplicable paradox of soul and body. This whole quivering undercurrent of life is treated with frankness, but also one must confess, with reverence, with a scrupulous respect for truth, and without offending beauty. Poems like 'In the Cage,' 'Saving a Woman; One Phase,' 'Arabel,' 'Jim and Arabel's Sister,' these poems in which Mr. Masters shows his supreme power in this book,— well, what are they but the poignant essences of the flesh, distilled from the mystic influence of sex in human life! Yet they are more than the expression of a mere intoxication of voluptuous passion; there are gleams of real vision through which we are permitted to see clearly beyond the actual experience. You may not like the subject, but one cannot deny that such a poem as the one I shall now read, called 'In the Cage,' is not both significant and beautiful:

" The sounds of mid-night trickle into the roar
Of morning over the water growing blue.
At ten o'clock the August sunbeams pour
A blinding flood on Michigan Avenue.

" But yet the half-drawn shades of bottle green
Leave the recesses of the room
With misty auras drawn around their gloom
Where things lie undistinguished, scarcely seen.

" You, standing between the window and the bed,
Are edged with rainbow colors. And I lie
Drowsy with quizzical half-open eye
Musing upon the contour of your head.
Watching you comb your hair.
Clothed in a corset waist and skirt of silk,
Tied with white braid above your slender hips,
Which reaches to your knees and makes your bare
And delicate legs by contrast white as milk.
And as you toss your head to comb its tresses
They flash upon me like long strips of sand
Between a moonlit sea, pale as your hand,
And a red sun that on a high dune stresses
Its sanguine heat.

" And then at times your lips,
Protruding half unconscious, half in scorn,
Engage my eyes while looking through the morn
At the clear oval of your brow brought full
Over the sovereign largeness of your eyes:
Or at your breasts that shake not as you pull
The comb through stubborn tangles, only rise
Scarcely perceptible with breath or signs,
Firm, unmaternal, like a young Bacchante's,
Or at your nose profoundly dipped like Dante's,
Over your chin that softly melts away.

"Now you seem fully under my heart's sway.
I have slipped through the magic of your mesh,
Freed once again and strengthened by your flesh.
You seem a weak thing for a strong man's play.
Yet I know now that we shall scarce have parted
When I shall think of you half heavy hearted.
I know our partings. You will faintly smile
And look at me with eyes that have no guile.
Or have too much, and pass into the sphere
Where you keep independent life meanwhile.
How do you live without me, is the fear?
You do not lean upon me, ask my love, or wonder
Of other loves I may have hidden under
These casual renewals of our love.
And if I loved you I should lie in flame,
And go about re-murmuring your name.
And these are things a man should be above.

"And as I lie here on the imminent brink
Of soul's surrender into your soul's power,
And in the white light of the morning hour
I see what life would be if we should link
Our lives together in a marriage pact:
For we would walk along a boundless tract
Of perfect hell; but your disloyalty
Would be of spirit, for I have not won,
Mastered and bound your spirit unto me.
And if you had a lover in the way
I have you it would not by half betray
My love as does your vague and chainless thought,
Which wanders, soars or vanishes, returns,
Changes, astonishes, or chills or burns,
Is unresisting, plastic, freely wrought
Under my hands yet to no unison
Of my life and of yours. Upon this brink

I watch you now and think
Of all that has been preached, or sung, or spoken
Of woman's tragedy in woman's fall;
And all the pictures of a woman broken
By man's superior strength.

"And there you stand
Your heart and life as firmly in command
Of your resolve as mine is, knowing all
Of man, the master, and his power to harm,
His rulership of spheres material.
Bread, customs, rules of fair repute —
What are they all against your slender arm?
Which long since plucked the fruit
Of good and evil, and of life at last,
And now of Life. For dancing you have cast
Veil after veil of ideals or pretense
With which men clothe the being feminine
To satisfy their lordship or their sense
Of ownership and hide the things of sin —
You have thrown them aside veil after veil:
And there you stand unarmored, weirdly frail,
Yet strong as nature, making comical
The poems and the tales of woman's fall. . . .
You nod your head, you smile, I feel the air
Made by the closing door. I lie and stare
At the closed door. One, two, your tuftèd steps
Die on the velvet of the outer hall.
You have escaped. And I would not pursue.
Though we are but caged creatures, I and you —
A male and female tiger in a zoo.
For I shall wait you. Life himself will track
Your wanderings and bring you back,
And shut you up again with me and cage
Our love and hatred and our silent rage."

"That is a remarkable picture," said Psyche; "but I suppose for most of us the moral sense refuses to search for the truth in it. And one asks why life should offer this particular angle to one who reads so clearly the script of our mortality."

"This side of the poet has overshadowed another side to the public. The quality that has not been fully comprehended in the poet is that which is contained in his poem called 'The Star.' You will find here that your realist is in spirit a passionate idealist; who sees the realities because the mysteries of this complicated existence have initiated his soul with sympathetic wonder." And I read these lines from the poem:

"And I saw mad Frederick
Arise and ascend to the top of a high hill,
And I saw him find the star
Whose image he had seen in the pool.
Then he knelt and prayed:
'Give me to understand, O Star,
Your inner self, your eternal spirit,
That I may have you and not images of you,
So that I may know what has driven me through the world,
And may cure my soul.
For I know you are Eternal Love,
And I can never escape you.
And if I cannot escape you,
Then I must serve you,
And if I must serve you,
It must be to good and not ill —
You have brought me from the forest of pools

And the images of stars,
Here to the hill's top.
Where now do I go?
And what shall I do?' "

"Understanding that," I went on, "the meaning and drift of the poem, and the deep message of a score of poems in this volume, will announce itself to you with tremendous force. Poems like 'The Vision,' 'So We Grew Together,' 'The Loop,' 'Simon Surnamed Peter,' 'All Life in a Life,' 'The City,' 'The Idiot,' 'On a Bust,' 'The Conversation,' and 'In Michigan.' The fullness of Mr. Masters' vision is only realized in a complete recognition of this other side of his talents, the side which applies symbols of a conservative faith to the experiences of the modern world. In the poem 'Simon Surnamed Peter' we see how thoroughly this old substantial faith has captured his imagination, is a part of his tolerant love and acceptance of human nature. And if you wish to see how he can lash that faith into a fury of indictment, there is the poem 'All Life in a Life,' depicting the social vision of Christ in a modern municipality. And of course, they crucify him all over again, only in a different way. There is a terrible irony about it, and a truth as pitiful as indignant hope always makes it."

"All that is true," exclaimed Psyche, "but let me present Mr. Masters in a mood so often denied him. He has a lyrical note not sufficiently commended, and I want to read these stanzas

'For a Dance,' to show his excellent gift in that mood. Listen," and she read:

"There is in the dance
The joy of children on a May day lawn.
The fragments of old dreams and dead romance
Come to us from the dancers who are gone.

"What strains of ancient blood
Move quicker to the music's passionate beat?
I see the gulls fly over a shadowy flood
And Munster fields of barley and of wheat.

"And I see sunny France,
And the vine's tendrils quivering to the light,
And faces, faces, yearning for the dance
With wistful eyes that look on our delight.

"They live through us again
And we through them, who wish for lips and eyes
Wherewith to feel, not fancy, the old pain
Passed with reluctance through the centuries

"To us, who in the maze
Of dancing and hushed music woven afresh
Amid the shifting mirrors of hours and days
Know not our spirit, neither know our flesh;

"Nor what ourselves have been,
Through the long way that brought us to the dance:
I have seen a little hill by Camolin
And odorous orchards blooming in Provence.

"Two listen to the roar
Of waves moon-smitten, where no steps intrude.

Who knows what lips were kissed at Laracor?
Or who it was that walked through Burnham wood?

"There," said Psyche, when she finished and we rose to leave the grove, "the wicked magician of modernity was killed and the poet rubbed the wonderful lamp when he wrote that."

We went down the road and left the woods at the edge of The Farm. We drank in the beauty of the late afternoon. "The fevers of life are cooled by the waters of peace," Psyche mused, as if the slanting rays of the sun opened up vistas over the quiet fields.

VIII

THE IDOL-BREAKERS (OTHER PEOPLE'S)

Of all the persons that I knew, Psyche had, I believe, the fewest prejudices, and, keen as she was in getting at the very essence of things, she seemed bewildered by some of our modern poets. She was in this, typical of a great number of people; many who did not have her excuse for not liking this new work; people who ranged from college professors through critics and poets themselves, down to the average citizen. It was a clear case of prejudice with most; with a few a matter of not understanding. Psyche did not understand much of the free verse, the *vers libre*, or modern poetry, whichever one chooses to call it. She merely had her feelings and sympathies, and preferred to keep an open road of conviction for each. I agreed with her that a great deal of this new work was not genuine. The test of what was genuine in it was the fact that the poets who were genuine would, and could, make the same impression on critical appreciation if they wrote in the regular forms. It was, in fact, I stated, only those poets who had shown their command of formal metres who succeeded in proving that *vers libre* was really not formless, and an ade-

quate medium for expressing every mood of life. What I had quoted from Arthur Colton's article "What Do We Mean By Poetry?" in the *Unpopular Review*, the other week, had made its impression upon my companions, and especially upon Psyche, who became more tolerant towards the new work. I had also explained the meaninglessness of names, by calling to her attention the change that had come over the "new" poetry, which preceded in popularity the advent of the Imagists and the later radicalism of Mr. Kreymborg and his associates.

This group of poets, which included Mr. Oppenheim and Mr. Untermeyer as the chief exponents of the "social conscience," was as violently opposed to the past as the later innovators, yet today, and only in the space of two or three years, their passion for newness of thought and expression has tamed considerably in public opinion. The poets themselves, I noted, are much more important merely as poets, weavers and makers of music and beauty, and the future promises fine and vital things from them, but they can no more startle us as iconoclasts, because their individual power has made their methods perfectly rational and proper. We have got used to their philosophy of revolt, which has certainly stirred up sympathies, but what attracts us is the ritual of art by which it is conducted while the doctrine becomes an appendage. "What is generally misunderstood," I said, "is the fact that it is not so much the form but the changing views of life

and experience which have brought about this new phase in American poetry. Mr. Untermeyer, when he so passionately preaches the gospel of 'new' poetry, doesn't mean the art at all; he is preaching the gospel of a new social life. So is Edgar Lee Masters a new democracy through his ironic delineations of the dead inhabitants of Spoon River; Robert Frost gives a new interpretation of the spirit beneath the tragic surfaces of New England life; and Amy Lowell shapes new crystals of emotion from the imaginative life of modern civilization. It is substance that counts in each and every one of these poets, and it is only substance that will keep alive the form, no matter whether it is the conventional rhythms of Edwin Arlington Robinson and Amelia Josephine Burr, or the free, unconventional cadences of James Oppenheim and Alfred Kreymborg."

We were walking up the Derry Road during this conversation, and reached our turning-in path just as I finished. There we stood a while to admire the landscape that spread below us in the intervale. "I know every figure in that sweep of landscape," exclaimed Psyche, with affection in her voice, and as if the sight suggested some vague comparison to her mind.

"Full of images, isn't it?" I hazarded an understanding of her thought.

"Yes; but so unified, so balanced, in their irregularity," she half consciously murmured.

"What do you mostly gather from the sense-impression of the scene?" I asked. "You see

those fields, and at this distance you know the hay is being mown, and though you are too far away for the wind to bring the scent of new mown hay, still you can smell it. A kind of scent 'in recollection'; so it is with all your other senses except sight. You see the landscape of the intervale stretched before you for miles, and yet you know all its life intimately by the response of your senses to memory and recollection. And how are you memorified, if I may use the word; isn't it by some current into which your mind swings by associated experience? Yes," I pulled myself out of the involutions of my suggestions, " the cadence of that scene magnetizes your spirit. It is regular and orderly in spite of that view being but a succession and collection of images to your sight."

Psyche, who had apparently been dreaming over her beloved intervale, woke up with a kind of start. " Oh, you mean," she said sharply, almost breathlessly —" that — is that what this free verse means? "

" Not what the free verse means," I corrected; " but what the substance of free verse, or any verse, means. Why just an ether of suggestions and meanings, of wonderful and beautiful emotions, behind the haze and veil of sense. Every sense is evocative and intuitional. Mysticism and wonder are the vital nerves which connect the outer world of reality with the inner world of spirit. Does it matter how the substance is shaped so long as it is given a being? "

She turned and led the way down our path, and came to the temple pine some minutes before the rest of us. When we came up to her and found our places, she informed us with simple conviction, "I've worked it out, I think; perhaps my prejudice has stood in the way. It seems perfectly natural when you look at it from that angle, but I think these poets have confused the whole matter by drawing superfine distinctions. I can take no stock of their aims; I must simply be satisfied with the measure of their beauty and magic; of the degree to which, with experience they increase, the solaces and enjoyment of life."

"We ask no more nor less from other poets," Jason remarked.

"Exactly," I agreed. "And accordingly you have found Mr. Arensberg a poet of exceptional attainments. One of the most subtle craftsmen in American poetry. A poet with a mind alluringly symbolic. With a touch of prismatic irony. Carving and polishing ivory and jade; chiselling marble, sardonyx and beryl. He works with a cool, undisturbed severity of mood on one occasion, and on another with a hot, passionate idealism. He can, as he shows in his rendering of the 'Fifth Canto' of 'The Inferno,' translate Dante better in his original rhyme and metre than any American living, and has pierced farther into the symbolism of Mallarmé, as his translation of 'L'Après-midi d'un Faune' proves."

A ripple of astonishment passed from one to an-

other of my friends. "You make him a paragon of poets," taunted Cassandra.

"Something of a master," exclaimed Jason in a tone of doubt.

"Well, he is an artist," Psyche timidly assented. "And," she added, "a fine thinker."

Jason hesitated at the brink of an opinion. With a certain poem of the poet's in mind I strove to pull him back from the chasm. It was mere thoughtlessness on his part to raise the point of propriety in regard to "The Inner Significance of the Statues Seated Outside of the Boston Public Library," a poem that had angered the moral conscience of New England. So I leaped to the mental rescue with the remark: "Of course Mr. Arensberg is an idol-breaker. Like Miss Crapsey, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Kreymborg; but they are breaking other people's idols. Nobody finds fault with you when you break the idols you have set up yourself. But smash theirs and there is an awful row about irreverence and apostasy."

"Then you mean it is a matter of choice," was Jason's quick response, "how one takes the title of Mr. Arensberg's book? He gives it the title of 'Idols,' but does it mean that he has set up new poetic idols or by an ironic inversion of the term, intends for you to understand that his poems are of the established ones? There seems to be something subtly mocking about his use of the word 'idols.'"

I flattered myself that I had succeeded in draw-

ing Jason's mind from the poem which he, in agreement with many others, regarded as indecent. But I had not succeeded as well as I thought, for his mind came back to it with unmistakable clearness. Apparently his indigation had been fully aroused, sweeping away every other consideration. But just as I despaired of stemming the tide of his denunciatory comment, Psyche unwittingly came to my rescue. The question of idols had stirred a parallel current of speculation in her mind, and with a considerable show of conviction she declared: "Law alone allows us freedom. The more freedom one possesses, the more one respects law. We do not break laws in art, we break their restraints, and establish on their foundations higher laws towards which we reach. It's an unalterable truth in life as well as in art."

It was a parlous stroke of which my friend with his outraged sensibility could easily have taken advantage to thrust home his rebuke. But one cannot always determine the psychological effect of suggestion. I resigned myself to the inevitable; there seemed nothing now to stop Jason from scoring that poem, and I simply prepared to cover his retreat as safely as possible. To my surprise Jason broke out in that laugh of his, so spontaneous and hearty, and exclaimed, "What a little philosopher you suddenly become at times, Psyche!"

Psyche ignored the remark. She plunged into a quotation from Mr. Arensberg's book, and read:

" I have a memory of a lonely room. . . .
The walls of it were as a garden wall.
O gardens of the world, O lost perfume!
Outside the world I read the *Fleurs du Mal.*
Ah me, I seemed to understand it all,
Till in the door I saw I know not whom.
She said: ' What are the flowers that you let fall? '
She seemed to say: ' It's I, it's I who bloom.'

" Was I at last afraid to be alone?
' Who are you, woman, whom I have not known? '
I asked, and as she gazed: ' Are you a child? '
Gravely she gave her lips and she was gone . . .
Gone with her wistful answer which she smiled:
' I am the deepest valley to the dawn.'

" He calls it ' Au Quatrième; Rue des Écoles,' " she said, " and I think it is a very fine piece of work. Notice every carven phrase. Mr. Arensberg's finish is quite remarkable, isn't it? "

" Yes," I replied; " and doesn't the elaborately chiselled beauty of this song remind you of Arthur O'Shaughnessy? " And I read " Falling Asleep ":

" O the dream that dandles,
Sleepy Head!

Lay aside your sandals
That have fled
Down a night of candles
By the bed.

O the changing pillow
That is bare!

Be a weeping willow
With your hair
Long . . . And on your billow
Lift me . . . where?

"The precise turn of his thought in the many quatrains has the neatness and force of Landor's cameo verse," Cassandra suggested. "These four lines 'To a Garden in April,' is a rare performance:

"Alas, and are you pleading now for pardon?
Spring came by night — and so there is no telling?
Spring had his way with you, my little garden . . .
You hide in leaf, but oh! your buds are swelling."

"According to your theory," said Psyche, "Mr. Arensberg is able to produce that superb poem, 'Voyage à L'Infini,' in the free manner because he is so perfect a metricist in these other poems."

"Yes; and could anything be more so in the age-tried forms than in the two translations in 'Idols'? I asked. The rendering of Mallarmé's 'L'Après-midi d'un Faune,' to which, by the way, Mr. Arensberg has wisely and lucidly added a commentary in an appendix, and the exact rendering in metre and rhyme of Dante's 'Fifth Canto,' from 'The Inferno,' attest all the more that if our poets are to go innovating in free forms, they must do so, to be successful and impressive, with an experienced accomplishment in the traditional and patterned laws of regular verse."

"Somehow I cannot place Miss Crapsey in that category," said Jason. "There is no question of her being an idol-breaker too; and though she has originated a new form she is less conscious of form than intensely conscious of substance." Jason's enthusiasm for Adelaide Crapsey's poetry, which I shared fully, Cassandra sympathised with, and Psyche accepted, won for him an uninterrupted flow of speech. "We are going to submit entirely to your presentation of Miss Crapsey's claims," I laughingly urged Jason on. "I am sure Psyche and Cassandra are both in a listening mood."

"Well, I have been very much moved by this poet," Jason replied in accepting my challenge. "I won't deny that her personal history has had an influence. She has been haloed with tragedy; spiritual tragedy, in which the indomitable conflict of will rose triumphantly over the betraying flesh. She wrote verse with the economy of speech and the prodigality of spirit; verse that wears its own habit of adornment, and having its own miraculous visions of life; this is the kind of verse Adelaide Crapsey has left us. There is a kind of wonder shining in the pages of her little volume; something too bright to be earthly, something too strong to be mortal. It is just this particular mystery,— that the 'touch of life' is turned to such golden purposes for all the menacing that the 'despot of our days, the lord of dust,' lays upon it. To be sentenced by this lord and despot, in the fulness of youth, makes the spirit cringe in

most of us. It aroused a scrupulous spiritual defiance in Adelaide Crapsey, and affixed her nature like a seal on the document of existence:

> "Wouldst thou find my ashes? Look
> In the pages of my book;
> And, as these thy hand doth turn,
> Know here is my funeral urn.

She set this verse down, in one of those more controllable moods, perhaps, as she looked out in her exile upon 'Trudeau's Garden,' as 'The Immortal Residue' of these earthly years. It contains more, this book, which is her 'funeral urn,' wrote Mr. Bragdon, in his biographical preface; it holds the 'ashes of a personal passion,' it contains 'infinite passion, and the pain of finite hearts that yearn.'

"The memory of Adelaide Crapsey," Jason continued, "will grow famous like the memory of Emily Dickinson, whom she resembles in the brevity, compact imaginativeness, and mystic glitterings of her art. Her personality is not as likely to grow vague as the sheltered and secluded New England poet. Mr. Bragdon has given us an intimate picture of the poet. 'Although,' he says, 'in Meredith's phrase, "a man and a woman both for brains," she was an intensely feminine presence. Perfection was the passion of her life, and as one discerns it in her verse, one marked it also in her raiment. In the line "and know my tear-drenched veil along the grass" I see again her drooping figure with some trail of gossamer be-

witchment clinging about or drifting after her. Although her body spoke of a fastidious and sedulous care in keeping with her essentially aristocratic nature, she was merciless in the demands she made upon it, and this was the direct cause of her loss of health. The keen and shining blade of her spirit too greatly scorned its scabbard, the body, and for this she paid the uttermost penalty.

" ' Her death was tragic. Full of the desire of life she yet was forced to go, leaving her work all unfinished. Her last year was spent in exile at Saranac Lake. From her window she looked down on the graveyard —" Trudeau's Garden," she called it, with grim-gray irony. Here, forbidden the work her metrical study entailed, these poems grew — flowers of a battlefield of the spirit. But of her passionate revolt against the mandate of her destiny she spared her family and friends even a sign. When they came to cheer and comfort her it was she who brought them cheer and comfort. With magnificent and appalling courage she gave forth to them the humor and gaiety of her unclouded years, saving them even beyond the end from knowledge of this beautiful and terrible testament of a spirit all unreconciled, flashing " unquenched defiance to the stars." ' "

Jason paused a moment as if to visualize the figure of this brave spirit sitting, under sentence by the window, and looking out upon " Trudeau's Garden " which was drawing her hour by hour to its oblivion.

"Yes," he began again, "her poems are the remarkable testament of a spirit 'flashing unquenched defiance to the stars.' The most effective utterance of the poet is in a form invented by Miss Crapsey which she called 'Cinquains.' They are like marvellously chiselled gems. Dynamic in mood or thought, these verses strike upon the reader's attention with surprise and wonderment. This form is undoubtedly a result of work upon which Miss Crapsey was engaged at one time, on the 'Analysis of English Metrics,' and it falls into the scope of the modern movement for new and concentrated expression. The vigor and depth of the poet's emotional and imaginative forces are in these 'Cinquains' at their ripest and fullest. The power to condense an abstract inner mood into this utterance, so concrete, so overpoweringly transformed, has all the evidence of that extraordinary quality we call genius. Let me quote you," Jason suggested, "a few of these 'Cinquains.' Here is one called 'Triad':

> "These be
> Three silent things:
> The falling snow . . . the hour
> Before the dawn . . . the mouth of one
> Just dead.

What a range of forces is there brought into the compass of a narrow circle. Not a superfluous accessory, but just snow, time and death visualized so subtly through the recognition of silence! There is the true quality of mysticism;

the keen, cutting imagination slicing through the elementals of existence. And again how many poets could have rendered that antique episode of morality about 'Susanna and the Elders,' in these lines of Miss Crapsey's?

> "Why do
> You thus devise
> Evil against her?" "For that
> She is beautiful, delicate:
> Therefore.

How she loads that simple word 'Therefore,' with mixed sophistry and scorn. It seems to shoot into hypercritical sentiment with the annihilating force of David's pebble. Out of the solitary listening to the 'Night Winds,' she is conscious of a mystery to the evocation of tears:

> "The old
> Old winds that blew
> Where chaos was, what do
> They tell the clattered trees that I
> Should weep?

And can one do aught but stand in 'Amaze,' at the atavistic thought of these lines?

> "I know
> Not these my hands
> And yet I think there was
> A woman like me once had hands
> Like these."

"'A woman like me once had hands like these,'" repeated Psyche, holding up her hands. "Could

it have been Deborah, or perhaps Susanna herself; or it may have been one of those tender women who wrapped the linen cloths about the hurt and pulseless limbs of the Master."

"There is an epic in those hands," remarked Jason seriously, with his eyes held by the book which lay open on his knee. "They may have touched strange webs, and the weight of precious gems made them a constellation in the path of men's eyes, but they will have vanished on the wind like a sigh, unless they have touched pain and sorrow. The thrill of that touch will come back into a woman's hand after a thousand years, and she will feel the rocking of stars and the shock of seas, and the dust of her being will tremble as though a gale of fire passed through her,—and . . ." Jason broke off, pausing a moment. "Yes," he resumed, "Miss Crapsey makes you feel the epic of continuity in those lines, for it is only through hands that there comes the realization of that gift which women alone can give to the world."

He paused again, and we flowed in on the tide of silence to those thoughts, vague, but holy, which filled his mind.

"I would almost rather not speak of this next poem," Jason apologetically remarked in a moment, "but the very spirit of the woman compells me to. Nothing in recent poetry is so quiveringly pathetic with brave defeat. Can you realize what it must have meant to Miss Crapsey to write 'To the Dead in the Graveyard Under-

neath My Window, Written in a Moment of Exasperation'? Not even Keats, dying there in Rome, has done a thing like this. No poet in our day has faced desolate hopelessness and left us a record of the experience. It is the supreme obeisance to reality in our poetry. It pulls one terribly to read it:

"How can you lie so still? All day I watch
And never a blade of all the green sod moves
To show where restlessly you turn and toss,
Or fling a desperate arm or draw up knees
Stiffened and aching from their long disuse;
I watch all night and not one ghost comes forth
To take its freedom of the midnight hour
Oh, have you no rebellion in your bones?
The very worms must scorn you where you lie,
A pallid, mouldering, acquiescent folk,
Meek habitants of unresented graves.
Why are you there in your straight row on row,
Where I must ever see you from my bed
That in your mere dumb presence iterate
The text so weary in my ears: 'Lie still
And rest; be patient and lie still and rest.'
I'll not be patient! I will not lie still.

"There is a brown road runs between the pines,
And further on the purple woodlands lie,
And still beyond blue mountains lift and loom;
And I would walk the road and I would be
Deep in the wooded shade and I would reach
The windy mountain tops that touch the clouds.
My eyes may follow but my feet are held.
Recumbent as you others must I too
Submit? Be mimic of your movelessness

With pillow and counterpane for stone and sod?
And if the many sayings of the wise
Teach of submission I will not submit
But with a spirit all unreconciled
Flash an unquenched defiance to the stars.
Better it is to walk, to run, to dance,
Better it is to laugh and leap and sing,
To know the open skies of dawn and night,
To move untrammeled down the flaming noon,
And I will clamour it through weary days
Keeping the edge of deprivation sharp,
Nor with the pliant speaking on my lips
Of resignation, sister to defeat.
I'll not be patient. I will not lie still.

" And in ironic quietude who is
The despot of our days and lord of dust
Needs but, scarce heeding, wait to drop
Grim casual comment on rebellion's end;
' Yes, yes. . . . Wilful and petulant but now
As dead and quiet as the others are.'
And this each body and ghost of you hath heard
That in your graves do therefore lie so still.

" Tragedy is here in this book," Jason went on, refusing any further comment on the poem he had just read —" as Mr. Bragdon says, but against it burns the flame of desire, the beautiful yearning that will not be, and is not, quenched until the pitiless despot has had his way with the flesh. But the triumph is not with the grim weeder of mortality. Here the spirit flashes and flames in the dark of our pitiful helplessness; the urn becomes a shrine; and there eternal memory keeps

the desire of life — the particular desires of Adelaide Crapsey's life, a clear and burning flame in the 'immortal residue' of her verses, 'Flowers of a Battlefield of the Spirit'!" Jason concluded on a note of profound sympathy.

"After Jason's talk on Miss Crapsey's verse I feel very incompetent to discuss these idol-breakers," Psyche confessed; "and I am sure Cassandra will approve of my suggestion that you will tell us what you think of Mr. Kreymborg's 'Mushrooms.'" This was addressed to me. Cassandra expressed herself as in agreement with Psyche's proposal.

"You are both in a listening mood," I exclaimed; "but there is Jason to consider."

"Oh, I distinctly differentiate the work of Miss Crapsey and Mr. Kreymborg," Jason quickly gave his opinion. "I am afraid Mr. Kreymborg needs to be interpreted for me. One cannot question the sincerity of Miss Crapsey's verse, the force of it appeals in every quivering revelation of thought and feeling. Mr. Kreymborg seems to be playing tricks on us. If I could once snatch the mask off there might be a real face behind, but it wobbles so incessantly the difficulty is to seize it. So I quite approve of Psyche's idea that you give us a rendering of Mr. Kreymborg."

"I don't at all ask you to agree with my opinion of this poet," I accepted the task, "and I am not, by that opinion, claiming any personal consideration. I wish to present what I believe are the characteristics of Mr. Kreymborg's work and

its special claim to attention. Personally I appreciate Mr. Kreymborg's verses very much. I think of his work as individual, though it is associated with a movement that has produced a great deal that is mere rubbish. I may be wrong, but time at least will judge that. In the meantime, my function is to consider the poet on his own ground, and judge him by those standards which I possess.

"The extraordinary symbol which Mr. Kreymborg uses in the title of his book of poems," I continued, "expresses with unusual fitness the character of the poems he has written. 'Mushrooms,' springing up in the dew of morning, glistening and sparkling in the fields under the first kiss of the early sunshine, are very apt illustrations, or rather analogies, of those moods that spring out of the mysterious substances of life which flow as experience and observation through Mr. Kreymborg's being. This is how the poet prefaces his collection. 'The Mushrooms spring up over night, I'm told — the truth or reason the botanists prove. This much I know, this I can tell: when I go into the forest I love, I can find them everywhere. . . . Mushrooms spring up over night in my heart — the reason let philosophers guess. This much I know, this I can tell: myriads on myriads have I found down there, and only a handful have I plucked so far. I plucked them, yes, the few I could, lest they'd die with those I couldn't reach. One was a mood of pale, frail form; another a whimsical sprite; one was some

black-browed child of Lear's — I carry them up to my hothouse attic, up to my gardener for cultivation.'

"This implies a preoccupation with secrets, the little secrets of life that are hidden away under the scrubby growths of experience. Mr. Kreymborg has been wise enough not to make, except through a statement on his titlepage, any plea for, or extenuation of, the forms into which his secrets are moulded. He is one of the ultra-radical innovators of contemporary poetic expression. As a matter of fact, it may be said, that Mr. Kreymborg fathered a new school of American poets. In his magazine called 'Others: A Magazine of the New Verse,' he brought this school into prominence, nourishing its daring eccentricities of style and form, and encouraged an extreme liberty in looking upon, and declaring, certain aspects of life. These poets of a school so definitely marked, as that represented by 'Others,' have taken a view of life whose earnestness is only exceeded by a fantastic indifference to moral values. They do not delight in disregarding convention, as poets in the past have delighted in repudiating the spiritual, moral and social standards set up by their predecessors; Mr. Kreymborg's followers have more violently, as a group, wrenched themselves from tradition. There can be no question, whatever one thinks of their work as a group, or as individuals, that they have been moved by the deep undercurrent of

forces which have lately stirred the souls of men. These forces have, for the most part, been social. If one probes deep enough one will find a subterranean stream of aspiration linking these poets with the magnificent social schemes of the day. This may seem a too serious mood in which to regard the school of 'Others.' Yet somehow, I think one must understand what is at the bottom of their protest. One is willing to admit that their resentment against life as they find it is not new; nor do they differ very strongly in their passions or their ideals from the radical groups of former periods. They have had a more difficult time in proving their sincerity than any other group of American poets. If this difficulty is great, a greater difficulty confronts them in convincing the average reader of their claim to artistic achievement. As a matter of fact, I believe they often fail artistically by exterior rather than inner convictions. Grossness and vulgarity; cheap and tawdry affectations; wilful perverseness of mood; dogmatism without a reasonable evidence of proof; a calculating arrogance of speech: these often make their work unsound in substance and trivial in expression.

"Many of these defects are due to youthfulness; but youth with all its latent and irresponsible tone of independence, must be treated with indulgence. I admit it would be easier to grant this indulgence, if youth were less serious in posturing the truths it claims to have discovered. We

must, however, even at its worst, admire the vitality in this work. And if we insist on following the diverse and tortuous streams of this vitality, we will somewhere come out upon pleasant fields, and pass through the cool and bosky shades of dreams and mysteries in the land of these adventuresome writers of free forms.

"Mr. Kreymborg," I impressed upon my listeners, "is the most potent singer of his school. This volume of his I am discussing, on the surface may present,— but I trust it will do more for those who really get beneath its surface — an array of oddities and conceits, of contradictions and paradoxes, which seem tenuous of substantial meanings. As Jason hinted, one may question very much his sincerity. But that, after all, is only his manner; and we must allow a man his individual temperament. Let me say, however, that at his best — and he is no more proportionally at his best than any other good poet — or however complex may be his expression, he is sound and suggestive in poetically rendering the moods and conditions of life that appeal to him. It is significant that the first poem in 'Mushrooms'— which he calls 'Fugue'— should, in the briefest compass interpret five of the major solutions of life. By each of these, or by some pathetic yearning for all, the individual seeks to unravel the riddle of existence; through philosophy, faith, labor, guerdon, or heaven. Each of these becomes interrogative in the poet's thought. Let us see, for instance, what he makes of faith and labor:

"Faith?
Oh yes!
A belief in you,
and you and you,
in spite of your you
and your you for you.
Labor?
Oh yes!
That my me and you
may become and grow
toward a you and me.

Even if this quotation does not puzzle the reader — which I'll not say it won't — it may be entirely too original to convince him. Now let us try the effect of Mr. Kreymborg's 'Credo':

"I sing the will to love
the will that craves the will to live,
the will that saps the will to trust,
the will that kills the will to die;
the will that made and keeps you warm,
the will that points your eyes ahead,
the will that makes you give not get,
a give and get that tell us what you are.
How much a god, how much a human.
I call on you to live the will to love.

One cannot find any difficulty in accepting the form which presents so persuasive a truth as these lines hold. The power of Mr. Kreymborg to compress a remarkably significant meaning, aglow with imagination, into the brevity of a couplet, is shown in this poem 'On and In':

" There's a wart on my nose, a patch on my pants — who cares?
'Gainst the itch in my veins from the hymn in my heart — who dares?

That may be nonsense to most people, and I daresay it got itself written on an impulse of ridiculous levity, but it does say something with ecstasy."

" What is the something? " asked Jason with a taunt.

" Oh, just that life is a very good affair no matter what happens to be your place in the world, providing you have a heart capable of response to beauty and joy, and will manifest it through an active relationship with your fellows. It is really very simple, isn't it? But surely it is very important too."

Jason uttered something that was like a grunt of disgust. " I haven't that kind of penetration for poetic values," he said. " But go on. For I see Psyche and Cassandra are almost convinced that Mr. Kreymborg is a poet."

" Don't mind him," exclaimed Psyche. " I'm sure you've done very well for Mr. Kreymborg."

" A very non-committal expression, milady," laughed Jason.

" I would like to call your attention," I arrested the persiflage of my companions, " to a poem none of you could fail to have noted in your reading. It is the ' Overheard in an Asylum,' a poem in which I think Mr. Kreymborg's imagina-

tion exalts a subtle conception. Let me read it:

"And here we have another case
quite different from the last,
another case quite different —
Listen.

"*Baby, drink.*
The war is over.
Mother's breasts
are round with milk.

"*Baby, rest.*
The war is over.
Only pigs
slop over so.

"*Baby, sleep.*
The war is over.
Daddy's come
with a German coin.

"*Baby, dream.*
The war is over.
You'll be a soldier
too.

"We gave her the doll —
Now there we have another case,
quite different from —

That is a rather tremendous piece of poignancy. It is sufficient to stamp the quality of Mr. Kreymborg's poetic substance. The extreme radicalism

of his poems are so utilized as to express a will, an imaginative and emotional sensitiveness, seldom betrayed by bad taste, or wildly unreasonable deductions. He saves what would seem strained by another poet of his particular group, by a wholesome touch of grace. The wistfulness of the poems in the group called 'Nephews and Nieces,' reveals the kind of wisdom which flows from sentiments whose source is pure. I have delighted in this book; and wherever I have not been able to accept the poet's philosophy, I have at least recognized the fresh and inquiring impulse which prompted the utterance."

"Do you think Mr. Kreymborg will ever be taken seriously?" asked Psyche.

"Do you think he wants to be taken seriously?" added Jason.

"I doubt whether it matters very much to him," I answered. "He has got something to say, and so long as he says it, he should have little concern with what the public makes of it,— if it will make something that is honest."

"Is that an attitude of the poetic temperament?" Cassandra wanted to know.

"I am afraid it isn't, but it should be," I replied. "And the evidence is in the prefaces which so many poets to-day are adding to their books. The effect of a preface is oratorical."

"Mr. Fletcher strikes another attitude, I see, in 'Goblins and Pagodas,'" said Jason.

"As in his volume of last year," I replied, "Mr. Fletcher has a preface in this new book, to

explain the fundamental principles of his art. It is a keen, lucid, explanatory piece of writing, but all the same I wish it had not been included. No amount of this kind of persuasion will help the reader to an understanding of the poet's particular form or substance. Whatever his method, the poems must stand by themselves. He must trust to their own revealing power. The person who leaves them without understanding or enjoyment, is the poorer for his own limitations. Poetry, after all, is a suggestive art; and the meaning a poet may consciously put into his work may, through the peculiar emotional and spiritual constitution of the reader, suggest an entirely different significance. Any poem that does not arouse sentiments and feelings of different realities to different people, is not a poem possessing the vitality to live even a very brief life. The surest success of any new form of art is that the substance becomes so finely evoked, the form dissolves emotionally into the impression of the material. It is a test any art must stand, and in which the art of poetry must stand unsupported by technical theories. It has been proved only too often that theories of poetic form and diction have become in time nothing more than mere cant."

"I quite agree in your opinion," Psyche joined in. "And Mr. Fletcher well illustrates the point in connection with the 'Symphonies,' in this volume. Here is a series of symbolical poems with a deep idealistic undermeaning. They are given the name of colors, because they create the mood

in which the soul expresses itself. These colors are symbols of a spiritual state; the series as a whole developing the ideal perfection of humanity. The poet explains his purpose in them in this paragraph I shall read from his preface: 'My aim in writing these was, from the beginning, to narrate certain important phases of the emotional and intellectual development — in short, the life — of an artist, not necessarily myself, but of that sort of artist with which I might find myself most in sympathy. And here, not being restrained by any definite material phenomena, as in the "Old House," I have tried to state each phase in the terms of a certain color, or combination of colors, which is emotionally akin to that phase. This color, and the imaginative phantasmagoria of landscape which it evokes, thereby creates, in a definite and tangible form, the dominant mood of each poem.' The central poem of the series is the 'White Symphony.' In it the poet describes the 'artist's struggle to attain unutterable and superhuman perfection.' I shall read it," Psyche offered, "though I won't profess to catch the cadence of *vers libre* as one trained in the principles of Imagism might."

"But you have read Henley's 'London Voluntaries,' and such poems as Matthew Arnold's 'Pilomela,' 'A Summer Night,' and 'Dover Beach,' very successfully," interrupted Jason.

"Yes, but the commotion of those poems was beneath the surface, and swept one into the current of meaning with an easy sensibility," re-

joined Psyche. "The commotion of the modern Imagist is sometimes too palpably on the surface. I don't deny a fine spiritual strain in Mr. Fletcher's verse, but I sometimes wonder at his verbal turbulence, why he need be so angry with words, lashing them into service rather than wooing and fraternizing them through self-possessed compulsion. Nevertheless you will hear a beautiful poem, which I hope not entirely to spoil in the reading." And Psyche read: the "White Symphony":

I

"Forlorn and white,
Whorls of purity about a golden chalice,
Immense the peonies
Flare and shatter their petals over my face.

"They slowly turn paler,
They seem to be melting like blue-grey flakes of ice,
Thin greyish shivers
Fluctuating 'mid the dark green lance-thrust of the leaves.

"Like snowballs tossed,
Like soft white butterflies,
The peonies poise in the twilight,
And their narcotic insinuating perfume
Draws me into them
Shivering with the coolness,
Aching with the void.
They kiss the blue chalice of my dreams
Like a gesture seen for an instant and then lost forever.

" Outwards the petals
Thrust to embrace me,
Pale daggers of coldness
Run through my aching breast.

" Outwards, still outwards,
Till on the brink of twilight
They swirl downwards silently,
Flurry of snow in the void.

" Outwards, still outwards,
Till the blue walls are hidden,
And in the blinding white radiance
Of a whirlpool of clouds, I awake.

* * *

" Like spraying rockets
My peonies shower
Their glories on the night.

" Wavering perfumes,
Drift about the garden;
Shadows of the moonlight,
Drift and ripple over the dew-gemmed leaves.
Soar, crash, and sparkle,
Shoal of stars drifting
Like silver fishes,
Through the black sluggish boughs.

" Towards the impossible,
Towards the inaccessible,
Towards the ultimate,
Towards the silence,
Towards the eternal,
These blossoms go.

" The peonies spring like rockets in the twilight,
And out of them all I rise.

II

" Downwards through the blue abyss it slides,
The white snow-water of my dreams,
Downwards crashing from slippery rock
Into the boiling chasm:
In which no eye dare look, for it is the chasm of death.

" Upwards from the blue abyss it rises,
The chill water-mist of my dreams:
Upwards to greyish weeping pines,
And to skies of autumn ever about my heart,
It is blue at the beginning,
And blue-white against the grey-greenness;
It wavers in the upper air,
Catching unconscious sparkles, a rainbow-glint of sunlight,
And fading in the sad depths of the sky.

" Outwards rush the strong-pale clouds,
Outwards and ever outwards;
The blue-grey clouds indistinguishable one from another:
Nervous, sinewy, tossing their arms and brandishing,
Till on the blue serrations of the horizon
They drench with their black rain a great peak of changeless snow.

* * *

" As evening came on, I climbed the tower,
To gaze upon the city far beneath:

I was not weary of day; but in the evening
A white mist assembled and gathered over the earth
And blotted it from sight.

" But to escape:
To chase with the golden clouds galloping over the horizon:
Arrows of the northwest wind
Singing amid them,
Ruffling up my hair!
As evening came on the distance altered,
Pale wavering reflections rose from out the city,
Like sighs or the beckoning of half-invisible hands.
Monotonously and sluggishly they crept upwards
A river that had spent itself in some chasm,
And dwindled and foamed at last at my weary feet.

" Autumn! Golden fountains,
And the winds neighing
Amid the monotonous hills:
Desolation of the old gods,
Rain that lifts and rain that moves away:
In the green-black torrent
Scarlet leaves.

" It was now perfectly evening:
And the tower loomed like a gaunt peak in mid-air
Above the city: its base was utterly lost.
It was slowly coming on to rain,
And the immense columns of white mist
Wavered and broke before the faint-hurled spears.

" I will descend the mountains like a shepherd,
And in the folds of tumultuous misty cities,
I will put all my thoughts, all my old thoughts, safely to sleep.

For it is already autumn,
O whiteness of the pale southwestern sky!
O wavering dream that was not mine to keep!

* * *

"In midnight, in mournful moonlight,
By paths I could not trace,
I walked in the white garden,
Each flower had a white face.

"Their perfume intoxicated me: thus I began my dream.

"I was alone; I had no one to guide me.
But the moon was like the sun:
It stooped and kissed each waxen petal,
One after one.

"Green and white was that garden: diamond rain hung in the branches,
You will not believe it!

"In the morning, at the dayspring,
I wakened, shivering; lo,
The white garden that blossomed at my feet
Was a garden hidden in snow.

"It was my sorrow to see that all this was a dream.

III

"Blue, clogged with purple,
Mists uncoil themselves:
Sparkling to the horizon,
I see the snow alone.

" In the deep blue chasm,
Boats sleep under gold thatch:
Icicle-like trees fret
Faintly rose-touched sky.

" Under their heaped snow-eaves,
Leaden houses shiver.
Through thin blue crevasses,
Trickles an icy stream.

" The pines groan white-laden,
The waves shiver, struck by the wind;
Beyond from treeless horizons,
Broken snow-peaks crawl to the sea.

* * *

" Wearily the snow glares,
Through the grey silence, day after day,
Mocking the colorless cloudless sky
With the reflection of death.

" There is no smoke through the pine tops,
No strong red boatmen in pale green reeds,
No herons to flicker an instant,
No lanterns to glow with gay ray.

" No sails beat up to the harbour,
With creaking cordage and sailors' song.
Somnolent, bare-poled, indifferent,
They sleep, and the city sleeps.

" Mid-winter about them casts
Its dreary fortifications:
Each day is a gaunt grey rock,
And death is the last of them all.

* * *

"Over the sluggish snow,
Drifts now a pallid weak shower of bloom;
Boredom of fresh creation,
Death-weariness of old returns.

"White, white blossom,
Fall of the shattered cups day on day:
Is there anything here that is not ancient,
That has not bloomed a thousand years ago?

"Under the glare of the white-hot day,
Under the restless wind-rakes of the winter,
White blossom or white snow scattered,
And beneath them, dark, the graves.

"Dark graves never changing,
White dream drifting, never changing above them:
O that the white scroll of heaven might be rolled up,
And the naked red lightning thrust at the smoulder-
ing earth!"

"You did read it surprisingly well," Jason praised. "There is a kind of lingering cadence in the voice which one can't get through the eye in such a poem. But what interests me very much is the substance. The relation of the mood to the color, is, I think, purely arbitrary. In this particular symphony the poet describes the 'artist's struggle to attain unutterable and superhuman perfection.' In what, may I ask? All through this series of symphonies, the goal, as we are told, is the 'city of art.' But that signifies nothing, unless the artist has some purpose in his pilgrimage. Professing idealism, yet he has no ideals. 'Let us take an artist,' explains the poet in his

preface, ' a young man at the outset of his career. His years of searching, of fumbling, of other men's influence, are coming to an end. Sure of himself, he yet sees that he will spend all his life pursuing a vision of beauty which will elude him at the very last.' But beauty should take some very definite shape in his dreams. It should have some meaning. That is what these symphonies lack. Could Mr. Fletcher have had Shelley in mind as his type of artist? But Shelley had passions; liberty, justice, love. These were real forces in a world of real people. Mr. Fletcher's artist dies ' for an adventure.' An adventure that makes no reckless sacrifice for truth, only a cautious pursuit of sensual enjoyment. What strikes me as chiefly notable in these symphonies is the profuse imagery of the natural world. The symbolism, in my mind, is scarcely related to any elements in the secrecy of human emotion. It's a noisy, external art."

" I don't at all agree with you, Jason," I said. " There is an indwelling something in these symphonies that is rather fine. They are ambitious, I'll admit; and they are new in our poetry. Only a few people will enjoy them as only a few will understand them. But with the exception of the ' Blue Symphony ' and ' Green Symphony,' I prefer the poems in ' The Ghosts of an Old House.' These poems are more appealing; less abstract, they have the ruddier substance of human experience. I have claimed for Mr. Fletcher a more poignant regard for old memories and associations, than any among our poets. It is a unique sense

because it is unmixed with the grosser elements of the present. He really transforms his being; the past is not brought up to time, he disembodies time to materialize the past. It is thus that he deals with his 'ghosts' of 'The House,' 'The Attic,' 'The Lawn.' One cannot conceive these 'ghosts,' as fancies of an imaginative mind, combining out of almost forgotten experiences these sharply etched associations. Each particular part of the house — bedroom, library, nursery, the backstairs and the front yard — have been too deeply engraved upon the hard substances of life. Yet there is something very common in these reminiscences very common to all of us; the things we more often think and dream about when there floats up to the surface of our consciousness, faded and mellow moods of childhood and youth. Let me read this verse on 'The Front Door,' and you cannot escape that ache which, though time heals it, the scar remains:

"It was always the place where our farewells were taken,
When we travelled to the north.

"I remember there was one who made some journey,
But did not come back.
Many years they waited for him,
At last the one who wished the most to see him,
Was carried out of this self-same door in death.

"Since then all our family partings
Have been at another door.

"Taking us through the attic and over the lawn, the poet touches, through the magic of his tender affection, many an old object and scene into life; life a little withdrawn, as it should be, from the rushing waves of the present, but stately and dignified in its vivid seclusion from the world of boisterous reality. The mustiness of decay has wrought no change upon that vivid reality of the past. In an 'Epilogue' to these ghostly presences hovering like wraiths over a twilight stream in the poet's heart, he loyally wonders

"Why it was I do not know,
But last night I vividly dreamed,
Though a thousand miles away,
That I had come back to you.

"The windows were the same:
The bed, the furniture the same,
Only there was a door where empty wall had always been,
And someone was trying to enter it.

"I heard the grate of a key,
An unknown voice apologetically
Excused its intrusion, just as I awoke.

"But I wonder after all,
If there was some secret entrance-way,
Some ghost I overlooked, when I was there."

"Yes," said Psyche as we left the woods, "the artist has grown human dreaming of the old house. *Art* is too often a barrier to poetry."

IX

THE NOSTALGIA OF BOURNES

There was something mysterious about Psyche's absence. She had not returned from town when we started for the grove. It was a very warm day; a sort of haze sifted through the valley; the woods were enveloped in that grayish veil which seemed to us the wind-borne sign of forest fires, burning beyond the range of the distant hills lying west of the Merrimac River. The air in the upper regions of the sky was opaque but for the angry red disk of the sun glaring in the mid-heavens. Our moods were in sympathy with the unusual condition which the accident of man had forced upon nature. Not only Psyche's absence, but the menacing sky wrought upon our feelings, till we experienced an anxiety we did not understand, nor tried to explain. Instead of going directly to our protecting pine in the sheltering grove, we passed beyond our usual turning-in path, up to the top of Laurel Hill, where a clearing gave us a wide view of the valley to the west and north. We stood and gazed at a scene which was both lovely and terrible in its aspects. The intervale before us was broken up into farms, whose home-

steads nestled like breasts of white birds in the earth. In the field the haymakers threaded their way, gathering the silver harvests.

Winding along the road in the middle distance, we saw a dark object approaching The Farm, where it stopped. Apparently someone had arrived, for after watching the object some moments, we saw it wheel around and return in the direction from which it came. "We have had a motor visitor," remarked Cassandra, "and our pleasure in the art of poetry has prevented an exercise of hospitality."

In the pause that followed her words, we were all watching a figure moving across the pasture towards the woods. "I do believe that it is Psyche," Cassandra spoke again. "But I can't explain the motor car."

We did not have to wait longer than it took Psyche to reach us — for it was Psyche — to discover the mystery of the car. She came up radiant, and with a provokingly secretive smile. "Our poets," I addressed her, "have waited long for your attention, Psyche, and I shouldn't blame them for complaining of your neglect of their rhymes, for the rhythm of the flowing road, which you apparently have been enjoying from the luxurious seat of an automobile. Lovers of poetry, it seems, may enjoy such a luxury of modern travelling on a hot day like this, even if poets themselves cannot; though we are supposed to be upon prosperous days for the art."

"You make it hard for me to confess my in-

discretion," Psyche replied with diffidence; "for I have really become romantic in this modern age, and purchased a 'knight.'"

"A stern and bold one, I trust!" was my surprised exclamation at her apology for neglecting poetry. Cassandra was too confounded for utterance; while Jason wore a smile of approval.

"Well, it is one, anyway, that can take me — and you, too, my friends, if you will accept my hospitality — over Mr. Clapp's 'Overland' route." And taking some sheets of paper from her bag, she began quoting as we walked along to the grove, this poem:

"Out of the desolation and the emptiness,
the vast flat, gaunt green land,
out of the pale, primeval, blue sky and the sweet sun,—
the horizon's gold and silver bastioned, purple-piled cloud mountain ranges
of thunder storms that bring thin rains at night,—
speak, O thou mute and mighty earth-transfusing spirit,
speak and break
the spell of the phantasmal, hurtling, inert, smiling day.
Voice of the dull-brown haycocks, listless windmills, the barren, squat, meek, lonely little houses,
the glittering, restless, wind-streaked chrysoprase of corn,—
stark dearth of red earth miles on miles, gigantic palisaded rock-ruins crumbling by dry rivers, thistles, daisies,
lank fences stalking out against the sky

threading the waste,—
voice of the soul of this treeless land where never
the feet of men were set till yesterday,
speak while the train
rolls making rhythms, rattling, roaring, clicking, crashing, caught
out of the emptiness, rhythms of space, sledge-riveted fast and faster
into my spirit, till my spirit makes its wings of them,—
nay more, bid thou God's self speak, as from west to eastern sea
wheels whirl me, hurl me, hissing, jarring, being bound beyond the sea . . .

" Let Him look out with me, with me remember
what else were but a hopeless cirque of changes,
the blank stupendous ages of the making,—
winter, spring,
the fierce, still summer, autumn when gigantic
winds hurled down His heavens on His earth,—
snow, the endless, soothing, saving, silent whiteness,—
as æon into less bleak æon crept.
O world divine!
add thou this to thy story, this remember,
how I caught up upon this beating iron thing,
saw clear as God sees,
in one moment seized in my life His life,—
how I, who foresaw seeing all with Him,
am all this vast land's dull unaging change, the gorgeous harvest,
and all the blue, pale sky, the fields, the houses, hills,—
I who am my love who sits across the ocean!

O to be for her sake, being her, creation's self and
God's self,
heart that feels it all and hand that makes and moves
continent and ocean, earth and heavens,
as grinding still, still breathless, ponderous, arrow-
like, relentless,
hour on hour we roar.
The bare land twists and twists and falls behind,
the cross-treed poles jump up, and flickering drift to
nothing — dots across the world's edge —
the eager wires, sagging, heaving on,
pierce the thin air with windless murmurings
far flashing light-swift thoughts from sea to sea.
But thou, more strong to grip life vast and whole,
greenly to grasp the great world like spring grass,
bluely to hold it mine like sun-blue seas,
to see beyond man, nature, fathoming God,—
be quicker than thy dreams, O soul of mine . . .
speed, speed, thou more than God, thou throbbing,
whistling pulse of all things,—
life, love . . .
and, O to be with you, my love, to be with you!
Desire makes all our fiery, shouting speed, stagna-
tion,
makes as the dead past nations yet to spring here
throned in the pregnant waste grown radiant,

and less than figments of a dying dream
the æon-builded earth, the building God
who knows no more than day and night, blue sky,
green earth,— who blindly makes and passes,
groping with mighty hands that shaping feel
ever from nothing into nothingness . . .
I,— O my all-embracing soul, my life's God-con-
quering, God-creating soul-vibration,—

I listen, care what has been, what will yet be,
love, being you, who fly to you? "

"It will take a pretty good car to follow Mr. Clapp's 'Overland' route," Cassandra suggested. "If the Overland roads are as irregular as his verse, there'll be difficult travelling, indeed."

"I don't know what Mr. Clapp's purpose may be," Jason added his opinion, "but to the eye he seems one of the free-formers, and to the ear a conventional metrist. He doesn't begin each line, but each stanza — which may be twenty-one lines, as in the opening poem of his volume, 'On the Overland,'— with a capital letter. Yet the lines may be of arbitrary length, without rhyme, or of regular metre and rhyme. Even so strict a form as a sonnet may be a one-sentenced affair with this poet."

"Mr. Clapp is a little startlingly neither fish nor fowl, it seems, in the matter of form," I joined in. "But there is something grim and resistless about his substance. He is what I call a poet of heavy encounters with life. He sings of the 'unutterable strength of sky and sea,' and of a 'tide-eaten crag in obdurate agonies,' that 'reabsorbs its foam of frantic hands!' His imagination is true, but ungovernable at times — like one's appetite rather than one's temper."

"Whatever it is like," Psyche exclaimed with conviction, "it is unlike any expression I could accept, to speak of feeling a 'stealthy sickness in these flowers.' The line occurs in a poem called

'Mist,' which shows, I believe, Mr. Clapp has a sympathy — maybe unconscious — with the traditions of the eighteen-nineties in English poetry."

"He's just a good masculine poet, with a clear-seeing eye, and little bother about illusions," commented Cassandra. "I am going to read this poem 'Cleared,' which is a good corrective against the sentimentalizing of reality. You don't know just what it is, but something stands naked in the lines. It is the spirit of nature declaring itself in the elements. Here it is," and she read:

"Exquisite indwelling cry of rain
out on these white and marching infinite
wave-armies staggering shoreward through the night!
The unwitherable strength of sky and sea
wavers and desolate and bodiless,
heedless and indecipherably driven
under the exquisite bleak cry of rain,
convulses at the unshaken foot of this
tide-eaten crag in obdurate agonies
and reabsorbs its foam of frantic hands.
Now scarce a sigh to the long foamless beach
clings, a trailing mist of ghostly light
clutches at darkness as wind-weary birds
clutch at the smooth face of a basalt crag.
Tortuous grey stricken sobbing of the rain!
My mind precipitate in the chill of thought
sweeps over, as your cry upon the sea,
the mutinous retreat of refluent life,
till transubstantiate on the baffled tide,
a phantom in the foam-frail prism of time,
it reassumes identity and leans,

a tower of shuddering sails through bursting spray,
far seaward into vastness and the night,
with swung blurred lights that gleam and reel and
fade
to me who turn across the unearthly sands
to let my alien body move again
among the patterned granite streets and past
the unsearchable windows of the lives of men."

"Yes, that is very good," I said; "stands out hard and clear. A picture from which all mystery has been taken, and yet it could not be painted unless one recognized the mystery in it."

"There is sight rather than insight, in the poem, you mean?" Jason interpreted.

"Perhaps," I admitted. "Certainly there is no pathway to the edge of the world, there is a frame around what the eye takes in; inside of the frame every detail is magnified by the clear, sharp strokes of an observing mind, outside of the frame is a sweep of infinity. In those depths beyond the actual, shut from the piercing gaze of eyes that have not a kind of second imaginative sight, lie the bournes towards which the spirit reaches in its most inspired moments. Certain poets have a continual nostalgia for those bournes. They lie somewhere at the edge of the world where you look over into a cosmos of glittering dreams."

"At least that is the difference you find" asked Psyche, "between Mr. Clapp's poems and Miss Caroline Stern's? The work of both has a touch of the elemental; but Mr. Clapp is compressive, and Miss Stern expansive, which I sup-

pose justifies her title 'At the Edge of the World.'"

"Some such difference, surely," I assented. "Miss Stern's title has a mystical inference. Her mood is an outreaching one; her spirit expansive. Now she need not deal in themes of dimensional space to prove the exercise of her imagination. It is the 'heaven in the grain of sand' idea of Blake, which comes more nearly to proving her title."

"What does one care about definitions," said Cassandra, "when presented with such a simple and appealing croon as this 'Mammy-Lore,' I am going to read?" And we listened to:

"Once Mammy took me out to walk.
I heard a partridge in the grass.
I never knew a bird could talk
So plain; and now we never pass
But he calls to us as we walk —
And Mammy says, 'It's like his sass.'

"For Mammy says he says:
'Bob, Bob, White,
Peas all right!
Won't be home before Saturday night!'

"Down in the pasture pond the frogs,
Says Mammy, are like naughty boys.
At night they hop on two old logs,
And there they make a mighty noise.
Little frogs and great big frogs,
Just quarreling like boys.

" Mammy says the little frogs say:
' Go-back! go-back! go-back!'
But the big frogs say,
' Knee-deep, knee-deep, knee-deep!'

" One time I heard a hoot owl cry.
'Twas in the middle of the night:
The wind sang, ' By-lo, hush-a-by.'
I was not scared — the moon was bright,
And Mammy came — I did not cry,
But Mammy thought I might.

" And Mammy told me what the owl said. She says he says:
' I cook for my wife, er who cooks fer you-u-all?
I cook for my wife, er who cooks for you-u-all?'

" The old-fashioned virtues of poetry," Cassandra commented after reading the poem, " is what Miss Stern gives us with a wholesome human interest. In poems like ' Narcissus,' and ' Youth,' there is a lyrical touch, the best quality that the art of poetry can have. The habit of the advanced modernist is to scratch such expressions as ' beaded wine,' ' faerie folk,' and to damn a cliché like ' wist,' but I am sure they do not blemish either the fervor or grace of a lyric like this on ' Youth ':

" My body held a merry guest
A many years ago.
He made of it a songful nest
A many years ago.
He sang through storm, he sang through shine:

His blood was quick as beaded wine,
His speech was like a wild rose vine,
A many years ago.

"The sad folk came from far and near
A many years ago.
His wilful caroling to hear,
A many years ago.
His mouth an April sun had kist;
He was of faerie folk, they wist.
He vanished like the morning mist
A many years ago."

Jason was very appreciative of the lyric Cassandra read, and of Miss Stern's volume as a whole. "She has distinction of the old-fashioned kind," he echoed Cassandra. "The two-act poetic play 'The Queen Decides,' which closes her volume, has some very fine touches of real power and loveliness, and warrants a future of notable achievement for the poet."

"Whatever that future," I declared, "Miss Stern's art shall never lose its nostalgic quality."

"I take but little account of that mood in her verse," said Jason. "Much as I admire her work, she doesn't seem to me ever to have had a home of the spirit from which she is exiled and longs to return. Unless it is that bourne in mystery which all poets have a consciousness of once having dwelt in, and spend their mortal lives trying to locate through dreams, growing melancholy when they can't reach it. The joyousness in the art of a Crashaw, a Blake, a Francis

Thompson is that they occasionally *do* return from the exile of this world to the home of their eternal births. To these poets the heavens are not a dome, but a floor paved with stars, on which the sun and the moon and the planets are huge jars holding red and white wine, to refresh the thirsty souls of pilgrim-poets wandering over that glittering pathway searching for the gate of heaven."

"You may be right, Jason," I said, "about Miss Stern's nostalgic quality, and your beautiful way of expressing the nostalgic mystery in the poetic temperament, especially the character of it in such poets as Crashaw, Blake and Francis Thompson, is true. But there is a more human embodiment of it which poets also express; a mood more people understand than they understand the starry heavens as an immense landscape in the deeps of which is hidden the gates of the celestial abode. The kind I mean Mr. Stork gives us in his narrative of Narragansett Bay folk. His hero has a true nostalgia of bournes; the horizons of the sea call him insistently in boyhood, and his youth and manhood answer the call with action and adventure. Then the call comes from the other direction; in foreign ports and alien lands homesickness overtakes the wanderer, and the ancestral farm beside the broad bay of Rhode Island pulls and pulls upon his memory until he goes back to live out his days in the cradle of his youthful dreams."

"That is just what romantic New England

does for her children," exclaimed Psyche with a hint of pride in her voice.

"You can't make the West or the South believe that romance was founded on Plymouth Rock," declared Jason. "The only thing that hard nest of colonization hatched were ideas and egotism. The first was frozen and the second pickled. Romance with a debonair air sailed into Jamestown, Virginia, and crossed the Cumberland Mountains into the wilderness; and there like a god it reproduced its own likeness, inspiring another epoch of romancing which cut through the Oregon trail to the Pacific Ocean."

"You are quite wrong," Psyche retorted vehemently. "The Cavaliers of Jamestown brought over the manners of the Jacobean court, its frivolous and audacious spirit, but it was neither frivolous nor audacious enough to penetrate into the wilderness; the transported prisoners did that, producing that pioneer class who opened up a new path for civilisation. But New England is romantic in its history, because it was founded on passion. That passion may have been as hard as the rock upon which the Pilgrims landed, but when the sun of liberty shone upon it, it glistened with an idealism which is to-day the foundation of American character. Puritanism did rebuke beauty, it did cultivate intolerance, it was narrow and uncompromising in its prejudices, it was also obstinate and irrational in holding to its theological beliefs, and was unsympathetic towards all points of view but its own — but it produced romance because

driven by passion into every one of these traits. This character of the community was upset by the will of the individual, forced by that same passion which opposed it. It was the primitive instincts of human nature revolting against the moral and social imposition of the communal spirit. The result was ironic comedy and tragedy in New England life. Puritanism is the most romantic thing that has touched the American continent," Psyche concluded in a decisive tone.

"I agree with you, Psyche," I said. "But northern New England has been chiefly the romantic and tragic background for the poet and the novelist. When, breathing in Boston, you say 'along the North Shore,' and 'along the South Shore,' if you are speaking to someone who knows the New England coast, you suggest localities that have for your hearer disproportionate historical memories and literary associations. The cause is obvious and yet indefinable. On the north is Salem, Gloucester, Cape Ann, and the Maine coast up to the Bay of Fundy; on the south is Plymouth, Provincetown and Cape Cod, New Bedford, Newport, and Narragansett Bay opening on the ocean where Block Island gleams in its face, thirty miles away, and the rough passage off Point Judith leads into the Sound between Long Island and the Connecticut shores. Along no other stretch of coast-line in America has history dotted so many bays and inlets and rivers, towns and cities, which romance, legend and tradition have made so rich through three centuries of dis-

covery and settlement, of growth and busy progress. All that has made this coast-line from its extreme northern end in Maine to Long Island Sound in the south, rich in character and tradition, has swept inland over the States and through the towns and villages, over the fields and through the woods, into the great range of mountains in the north and the lowlands of Rhode Island and Connecticut. Three things have combined to make the inhabitants of this region homogeneous in character; the sea, Puritanism, and the ideal of political liberty. The rivers that thread these States have kept the farms and the towns under the spell of the sea; and the town meeting, the perfect type of democratic government, has everywhere leavened the encroachment of corruption which has stolen into the rule of the large cities.

"North of Boston has been the rich quarry," I continued, "of the poet and novelist. South of the city along the coast to Long Island Sound, traditions and associations and legends have also been rich, if not so appealing to the imaginative mind. There is now a colony on Cape Cod which is turning that region into literature. Some years ago at Scituate, a group of poets and writers drew inspiration from the sea; among them Bliss Carman, who wrote some very fine things there. But there are two places along the southern shore that seem never to have been finally embodied into the literature of the New England coast: Plymouth, with its historical and traditional associations of the landing and settlement of the

Pilgrims, and the Narragansett Bay region. Jane G. Austen wrote some novels of a fine romantic strain and historical importance of the Plymouth settlement and the subsequent colonial growth, and though once quite popular, they seem to be forgotten now. A number of local poets have celebrated the picturesque waters of Narragansett Bay and its environs, rehearsing the many Indian legends that are common to both its banks. The material there is very rich and awaits the Rhode Island poet to shape it."

"Suppose you go on and tell us what Mr. Stork in his narrative poem 'Sea and Bay' has done for the region," suggested Jason. Psyche and Cassandra confirmed the suggestion as a good one. I am afraid the sultriness of the summer afternoon had got into their blood. The brook ran drowsily a few feet away, and the low insistent murmur of its current as it washed over a little fall at the bend, put them into a listening mood. Jason was already stretched at full length upon the warm, fragrant floor of pine needles gazing through half-shut eyes into the shadowy branches of the trees above. Psyche and Cassandra settled themselves more comfortably on the ground and prepared to listen; there was in all three a relaxation that threatened to be entirely uncritical and accepting.

"There is such an atmosphere of determination in your comfort," I addressed the three of them, "that I see no way of escape. So I shall just ramble on about Mr. Stork's poem, reciting a

good deal of what you already know, and slipping in an opinion now and then, and quoting lines to illustrate the story.

"When I said that the environs of Narragansett Bay awaited the Rhode Island poets to put them into song, I did not mean to depreciate Mr. Stork's attempt in 'Sea and Bay.' There is so much poetic material in the history and tradition of the region that a lifetime of effort cannot exhaust it. In the meantime, Mr. Stork has put the bay-folk of Rhode Island into a narrative poem that has a very telling significance. He has done in a measure for the southern part of New England what a great many poets have done for the northern part. He has done it individually, and without leaning in any sense upon the success or achievements of his contemporaries of the north. For all its compactness of spirit, there is a diversity in the motive and character of New England life, and all a poet needs is the imaginative power to reveal it. What Mr. Stork reveals in this long narrative is the influence of the bay and sea upon a man's life. His hero, Alden Carr — a good Rhode Island name, by the way — is drawn from the farm of his fathers by the spell of the bay, and the bay awakes in him a hunger for the sea. A chance voyage to the Grand Banks determines his fate. Then comes the sea-life, through which he changes from the silent, moody youth, to a man of the world. His exploit is not only a test of his physical endurance, but also of his moral character. He returns,

with his charming French wife, to a domestic life by the bay, becomes an inspector of lighthouses, and lives his days a sea-memoried man in thought and mood.

" This is the merest outline of the poet's story. Filled in with the details it makes a narrative that carries one along with deep interest. There is the picture of the farm and the stern mother to whom duty towards her children took the place of love in the daily routine of existence. She wished Alden, her eldest boy, to be a farmer, while in his heart was a hunger for the sea; this estranged mother and son. The account of the lad's progress at school contains some sombre strokes, relieved only by the bright invasion into his moodiness of the girl Hilda who was sympathetic and kindly while all the other boys and girls either ridiculed or shunned him. His disposition was not altogether pleasant in these youthful years. What it might have hardened into is easy to guess had not a strong influence of idealistic tendency crossed his life at this time. This influence was exercised by the artist Brinton, who had come to board during the summer at his mother's house. Young Alden went into the fields carrying the apparatus of the artist and watched him paint. While he painted the man opened the boy's mind to many truths and realities, to the ideals and inspiration of the spirit, and the beauties of nature. Brinton loved to talk, and he found in Alden a ready and eager listener. The response of the young mind was quick to sugges-

tions, and once when the boy thought he had detected a flaw in the man's opinion about painting nature, he asked,

"'If photographs weren't better than his art,
Since they put all in . . .'

the artist replied —

"'Put in all of what?
Why, all the trees and clouds and waves, you say.
But does that give you Nature? No, no more
Than the town census gives you breathing men.
Dry facts aren't Nature; Nature is a thrill,
A bounding in the blood. Leave out man's heart
And there *is* no Nature, only sticks and stones.
Nature is just the wide deep soul of things
That speaks to all of us, giving each no more
Than he can comprehend. Those men who paint
Just rocks and trees do worse than photographs,
But he who paints the harmony and joy
Which Nature's voice awakens in his soul
Brings, poet-like, new beauty down to earth.
As no man's soul is big enough to grasp
The whole of Nature, so in some degree
The greatest painters fail.— Why, bless the boy!
His brow's as wrinkled as a millionaire's,
His eyes are bulging and his mouth agape.
Don't try to gulp all Emerson at once,
Sonny, but give me a hand here with my traps
Or else we shan't be home by supper time.'

"Under this man's guidance the boy of the bay when he became the man of the sea, was to explore Paris and Italy. Into his life before this were to come many trials and tests of character.

The episode of the West Indian hurricane was one of the severest. There came to the surface then a great deal that was hidden in the depths of the man's being. I want to read this passage descriptive of the storm and the man:

"Sometimes amid the storm I heard a voice
That penetrated to my soul; a voice,
Persistent through the tremor of the winds
And deeper than the crashing of the waves,
Which gave me confidence. 'Twas not the voice
Of reason, which had taught me to despair.
The tones which then I heard were for the ear
Of faith alone, and dimly as they spoke,
They told me that my life was in His care
Who had made the sea and held it in His hand.
Once in especial did I feel that faith,
In a West Indian hurricane: — waves mast-high
And purplish black beneath a sky which hung
Like the Great Terror, while a ghastly light
Shone through, as if the malice of his eyes
Glared out beneath the menace of his frown.
Though gale and billow rushed at his command,
Yet he, beholding with satanic pride,
Forebore to turn his Nero thumb and give
The signal to destroy us. We meanwhile
Fought for two days to meet the storm head-on,
Our small ship lurching down the ocean hills
As to some dread abyss, then pausing, rising
With slow heat-sickening effort, throwing tons
Of foamless water from her forward deck,
To climb another hill with drunken heave
And topple helpless downward. As her bow
Thus overhung, a smaller wave would smite
Like a skilled boxer's fist beneath the chin,

Shattering the strength. A sidewise blow would drive
Us bulwarks under, pushing ever down,
Till scarcely we could stagger up again.
Within the ship 'twas dark as doom, and screams
Of women rang like shrieks of tortured souls.
On the third day the rudder was torn off,
The engine stalled, the steel plates wrenched and bent
Till water poured in through a score of seams.
The wind was even stronger than before,
The sky more angry and the waves more huge.
No one had slept, our food was running short,
And we were rolling crippled in the trough
Of waves so steep we hardly saw the sky
Between them. Then at last the captain paused
From fighting, and his tense-drawn face relaxed.
(I was alone with him in the pilot house.)
His solemn gentle look was strange to me
Amid such pressing peril, till he spoke:
'Carr, under God, we've done the best we could.
We'll leave it to His will, perhaps He means
To show how vain our efforts are and make
Us trust in Him entirely.— Well, I do,
And if we sink next minute, as we may,
I'll never think but He ordained it so.
And yet His Hand might save us even now.'
I looked toward heaven as the vessel rose,
And there above the wave's long crest, I saw
A blue rift open in the pall of cloud,
And thin pure rays of sunlight spilling through.
Then the Great Terror trembled, and the glare
Faded within his eyes, his form dislimned,
He shrank away before the smile of God.—
That night the tempest fell and we were saved.

"There was God's mercy. Oftener still His Love
Would be made visible, when, sunset-blest,
My gaze would drift across the glimmering floor,
Illimitably lovely, till it reached
And rested on the glowing citadels
Of rare celestial promise, crowned with light
Eternal; for although the sun would sink,
My soul would take such living hues of joy
That memory's brush might use them once again
To paint the scene in hours when prisoning skies
Would shroud the day with gloom.

"These greater times
Of exaltation and of insight came
But seldom with their high transcendent power;
Not often was it granted me to read
The word of God (I mean the world) with faith
So happy. No, nor could I always feel
The Grecian beauty or Teutonic strength
Reflected from the myths I used to read
In school-boy days. Most of the time it seemed
The ocean was a well-established friend,
Breathing a cheerful, boisterous comradeship,
Jostling and tussling as we romped along
To try my strength and temper, keep me fit
In mind and muscle.

"Through all his roving over the earth there was always in Carr's mind the image of his friendly school-mate Hilda. He never seemed to have a doubt that she was his, that she waited there in the little home by the bay for him to come like some modern knight from his adventures, to

claim her hand with a romantic flourish. It never occurred to him that his silence might affect her devotion, that neglect might easily be an assurance of his entire forgetfulness of her. He gave her no credit for the pride which all women possess, and which when injured by the indifferent lover drives the woman into the importunious arms of another man. It came to this sea-rover that Hilda was the woman that he wanted more than he wanted anything in the world, and with characteristic impulsiveness he decided to return home and make her his wife. But the news of her engagement to his brother Phil met him on the way. This completely upset him. Without the thought of her as the dearest possession of the days to come, he lost that moral equilibrium which had saved him from the numerous pitfalls in the pathways along which his life was cast. Now for a while he turns to the way of the world with a reckless abandon: the evils of life were tasted. In the course of time he is taken with a dangerous fever and is put off his ship in France. With his recovery comes also a saner view of things, a complete and unregretful acquiescence towards the loss of Hilda. A deeper, truer, influence is Seraphine, the daughter of his doctor, and with her he falls rapturously in love. The poet makes a lovely and exquisite idyl of this affair. Carr marries and takes this bright and charming girl home among the bay-folk to live. The contrast which the poet draws between Seraphine's nature and the nature of her husband's relatives

and neighbors, is full of pathetic and appealing touches. But there, finally, the man of the sea settles down under the influence of the bay, lives his gentle, domestic life, attends to his duties of the lighthouses, and watches his children grow up."

"There's a capable story in that," Jason suddenly shot from the ground. "I am glad to see poetry return to a treatment of common experience. Telling us something about people and the lives they live instead of merely showing us states of being."

"I have often wondered which of the two functions of the poet was the more important to mankind: his function as a teller or as a revealer. It is very easy to find the same significance in both these terms. As a teller, of course, the poet reveals, but as a revealer he is not necessarily a teller of events. The teller will always find listeners, man is prone to heed a chronicle or a gossip, whichever the tale may be; but to make men *see* what you have to show is a much more difficult matter. Many a poet like John in Patmos have apocalyptic visions, but in the Revelation men do not see the 'seven angels of the seven churches,' nor the 'seven golden candlesticks,' nor the 'twelve foundations' of the wall of the Holy City, that 'were garnished with all manner of precious stones,' jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth and amethyst. The apocalyptic visions of John is the diary of a her-

mit, it has a human interest as a personal experience, and is therefore a story, that is why we see the New Jerusalem. Now all the great poets when they wanted us to see life told us a great story: Homer in 'The Odyssey,' Dante in 'The Divine Comedy,' Milton in 'Paradise Lost,' Keats in 'Endymion,' Tennyson in 'The Idyls of the King,' Browning in 'The Ring and the Book,' and Morris in 'The Earthly Paradise.' Lyrical poetry is inadequate to do this — show us life through emotional and subjective revelations; so the narrative art came into practice again, a mirror large enough to reflect the broad life of man."

"Read us that song about 'Pedro's Plunge,'" requested Jason. "Mr. Stork's has lyric as well as narrative ability, I think."

"Yes," I consented; "that can well close my remarks about this interesting poem." And I read:

"The sky was a dazzling turquoise,
The sea was an amethyst,
And the palm-fringed shore of a Cuban bay
By the westering light was kissed,—

"When a steamboat came to anchor
In the curve of the hot white sand,
And a score of native boats put out,
By swarthy half-breeds manned.

"Oh, some they would sell their luscious fruit,
And some they would sing and play,
And some would dive for a copper coin
Flung into the waveless bay.

" But one like a bronze Greek statue,
Disdaining so mean a prize,
Gazed up at a girl by the railing,
With humble passionate eyes.

" Then the calm of the scene was broken
By a shout from a dozen throats:
' Shark! shark! ' and the splashing swimmers
Were tumbled into the boats.

" The girl looked out at the water,
No shark did her gaze discern,
She looked at the eager Pedro
And saw his dark eyes burn.

" She held out a bright gold sovereign
With a gesture of proud command
And threw it out from the vessel
With a toss of her slim white hand.

" The blood of his Spanish fathers
Still pulsed in him bold and hot.
What is death for the smile of a woman?
And he dived like a plunging shot.—

" He dived, and the winking gold-piece
Was clutched in his firm brown fist,
And he turned to strike for the surface
With a sudden, desperate twist.

" The beautiful girl applauded
And leaned from her vantage-place
As he rose, but she saw no pleasure
In the look of his set sad face.

"The water was cut between them
By a fin and a churning tail,
A streak of white gleamed deadly bright,—
The girl shrank back from the rail.

"That instant the great shark got him
And made for its deep-sea home,
While vainly behind them shots rang out
And hissed in the scarlet foam."

Psyche shuddered at the picture. She was on her feet, and we followed her as she silently led the way to the road.

X

"THE GLORY THAT WAS GREECE"

The August day was perfect. It is a kind of perfection that no other month in the year can quite match.

"A neglected month," said Jason.

The heat, I think, had something to do with his sympathy. He expressed it in the tone with which one says, "November is chill and drizzling." He was forlorn about the heat, and missed, I believe, the wonderfully pregnant quietude of August days.

"August," I said, "is of the fulness of time. Time triumphs in August. It is rich, ripe and golden; serene and melancholy. All the other months are garrulous in one form or another. August is full of the sense of sound; its rhythm is silence."

"The month of vacationists and the fiction number of magazines," remarked Jason contemptuously.

"Your mood is hollow," exclaimed Cassandra, reprovingly.

"So is the earth and sky — of air!" Jason rejoined.

I let the remark pass as of no consequence. A

light breath of air came through the trees filled with the hot scent of the pines. It was intoxicatingly sweet. "Did you catch that?" I asked Jason. The odor worked like magic. Listlessness took a visible departure from his being. And he began to quote:

"There were four apples on the bough,
Half gold, half red, that one might know
The blood was ripe inside the core;
The color of the leaves was more
Like stems of yellow corn that grow
Through all the gold June meadow's floor.

"The warm smell of the fruit was good
To feed on, and the split green wood,
With all its bearded lips and stains
Of mosses in the cloven veins,
Most pleasant, if one lay or stood
In sunshine or in happy rains.

"There were four apples on the tree,
Red stained through gold, that all might see,
The sun went warm from core to rind;
The green leaves made the summer blind
In that soft place they kept for me
With golden apples shut behind.

"The leaves caught gold across the sun,
And where the bluest air begun,
Thirsted for song to help the heat;
As I to feel my lady's feet
Draw close before the day were done:
Both lips grew dry with dreams of it.

"In the mute August afternoon
They trembled to some undertune
Of music in the silver air:
Great pleasure was it to be there
Till green turned duskier, and the moon
Colored the corn-sheaves like gold hair.

"That August time it was delight
To watch the red moons wane to white,
'Twixt gray seamed stems of apple-trees:
A sense of heavy harmonies
Grew on the growth of patient night,
More sweet than shapen music is.

"But some three hours before the moon
The air, still eager from the noon,
Flagged after heat, not wholly dead;
Against the stem I leant my head;
The color soothed me like a tune,
Green leaves all round the gold and red.

"I lay there till the warm smell grew
More sharp, when flecks of yellow dew
Between the round ripe leaves had blurred
The rind with stain and wet: I heard
A wind that blew and breathed and blew,
Too weak to alter its one word.

"The wet leaves next the gentle fruit
Felt smoother, and the brown tree-root
Felt the mould warmer: I, too, felt
(As water feels the slow gold melt
Right through it when the day burns mute)
The place of time wherein love dwelt.

"There were four apples on the tree,
Gold stained on red, that all might see
The sweet blood filled them to the core:
The color of her hair is more
Like stems of fair faint gold, that be
Mown from the harvest's middle-floor."

"Ah, Swinburne!" exclaimed Psyche, when Jason finished, "what an imcomparable lutanist he is. 'Mute August afternoons,' full of the 'undertune of music in the silver air.' And gold, gold, in everything and everywhere."

"Your modern critic,— I would say too, your modern poet — may deny to Swinburne substance and sense, but one glory cannot be denied him, and that is the glory of music," Jason declared with as much enthusiasm as the heat would permit him to show. "Why, music is the very garment of dreams — so much of our modern poetry is undressed," he drawled back into silence.

I could not let what I regarded as a challenge from Jason concerning the poetry of August, pass, so I repeated these lines by Mr. Howells:

"All the long August afternoon,
The little drowsy stream
Whispers a melancholy tune,
As if it dreamed of June
And whispered in its dream.

"The thistles show beyond the brook
Dust on their down and bloom,
And out of many a weed-grown nook
The aster-flowers look
With eyes of tender gloom.

"The silent orchard aisles are sweet
With smell of ripening fruit.
Through the sere grass, in shy retreat,
Flutter, at coming feet,
The robins strange and mute.

"There is no wind to stir the leaves,
The harsh leaves overhead;
Only the querulous cricket grieves,
And shrilling locust weaves
A song of Summer dead.

"Our American poet," I said, when I finished, "agrees with the English poet that August is silent, mute, and yet they both make her musical. But it is the music of quiescence, the subdual of dreams — really," I hazarded, "the miracle of birth."

"Birth!" declared Jason, with surprise, and shaking off his enervation with a vigorous gesture of his hand.

"Yes, birth," I repeated. "'There is a budding morrow at midnight,'" I quoted from Keats. "August is, in a sense, the midnight of the year. Not December, as is commonly accepted," I hastened to explain, "for that month is the dawn of the year." It was a puzzling fancy to my companions. But such a calendar of the year I had believed in since a child. Somehow man always seemed very dull to me in his perception of the seasons. He lost most of the wonder of time and change, by only regarding the surface of experience. "Time and change," I repeated aloud,

as we lolled in the heat under our pine, " as Henley sings in that tribute to his dead friend Stevenson — they drive the ' best of our dreams under,' they ' have looked and seen us,' but we are too blind to see them in their subtle and mysterious treatment of material things. But if we do see them at work, as some poets do, they bring back the imperishable glories of forgotten dreams."

" Oh, dreams are all right," murmured Jason from his crumpled form on the ground. " Yes, dreams are all right; only this confounded heat won't let the spirit cage them. Thought is like a wire door that their soft white breasts push open and away they fly to some cooler spot. I'll bet Cassandra is full of them, she looks so cool. How do you women manage it when the temperature is around a hundred? "

" Here, Jason," I remonstrated, " we won't have that nonsense diverting this discussion about the Greeks."

" Well, let me know when you get to Aulis. I hope it will be in time to catch that favorable wind that is to take Agamemnon and his ships to Troy."

" Were they all dreams," I ignored Jason's levity, " which Euripides gave us in his drama? The invisible turning of Iphigenia into a deer at Aulis instead of making her Achilles' bride, to be sacrificed by the sword in the hands of her father in the hope of gaining from the gods a favorable wind to take his ships to Troy? And her mysterious reappearance at Tauris to perform

the sacrificial rites at the shrine of Artemis? Was all this a dream of wonder in the Greek dramatist? We regard these things as symbols, all these Greek myths. But were they not the dreams of a race intoxicated with beauty? Yes," I repeated, "intoxicated with beauty. And intoxicants we are becoming by the gifts of a few wise modern poets. Mr. Bynner, Mr. Hagedorn, and Mr. Ledoux have made us realize lately the need of these old dreams. But I was curious to note the profoundly modern note of faith with which Mr. Bynner ends his rendering of 'Iphigenia':

> *"The more in Thee we lose*
> *Our lives, the more we find our life in Thee.*

The poet himself italicized these lines, as if to emphasize the theology of St. Paul."

"Which St. Paul do you mean?" asked Jason. "There are two, you know. There is the St. Paul of the commentaries, and there is George Moore's St. Paul. In the opinion of the author of 'The Apostle,' and 'The Brook Kerith,' there was little difference between God and Zeus. He makes St. Paul crystallize the fancy of a pagan god into the reality of a Christian Deity."

"Your rambling about the superfine conceptions of George Moore is impertinent, to say the least," censured Cassandra.

"Oh, well, if a man can't be frivolous with a serious idea on a hot day, he ought to seek a cooler place than the present company of ladies,"

and Jason withdrew into the silence of his discomfiture.

"You certainly have none of the glory that was Greece in your behavior," I charged Jason. "I half believe that you agree with some modern poets that there is no glory left in the memory of Greece. Tinsel, remote, and shop-worn are all those gods and heroes that men once believed in. Thus to make poetry out of their fabled doings, and to give them character in story and drama, is all wrong, because they have no relation to the common people of to-day."

"The glory that was Greece is in my very blood," mocked Jason. "It is so very warm and fervent at this moment."

"Mocker!" cried Cassandra.

"All the figures of that world of legendary Greece, so real to the religious fervor of the Greeks, the modern world has inherited as the symbols of human destiny and experience; and their significance, after thousands of years, has not lost force nor meaning," I went on. "Pagan ideals, as Mr. Lowes Dickinson has shown us, and which those symbols clothe, are the ideals which in our spiritual nature we strive most to realize. If we could combine the ideals of paganism — grace, beauty and sanity — with the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity, we would have a perfect humanity. We can scarcely reach that perfection towards which we aspire without the wedding of these high qualities of paganism and Christianity. The modernist who neglects to ap-

preciate this fact looks at life with atrophied faculties. And this is true of many of your bards of democracy. Life is keenest, brightest, full of the virtues which affect our unceasing efforts to evoke the dominant passions of joy and beauty when rooted in Greek thought and feeling. Yet a certain critical attitude to-day can see no force of life in pagan subjects, because there is no vital ugliness such as modern civilization presents through social diseases and industrial tyranny. The queer conceptions which advocate that life can only be discerned and experienced in such conditions as sadden our relation to the world, and our fellowmen, and which repudiate any attempt to heal our spirits by holding up the mirror of imagination to that old world of beauty, are erroneous."

"But now and then, here in America, a poet speaks out for the old beauty," claimed Psyche.

"Yea; and the most thoroughly imbued with the classic mood, among the younger American poets, is Louis V. Ledoux," I replied. "In him rings a genuine passion. No false simulation; no mere reflection of a glamor that is remote by association, nor the thin echo of other imaginative voices, has any part in him. Take the speech of Persephone, in the fourth act of his new lyrical drama 'The Story of Eleusis,' and note the real vision that animates his art:

"I knew not that the world was very old
And sad beneath the burden of its years,

But here among the souls of men outworn
Are folk of long ago; forgotten kings
Of cities buried by the sand or sea
In unremembered ages; shepherd boys
Who learned their piping ere the birth of Pan;
Slim maidens sweet to love; and children lost —
White petals fallen in a field of death
Where winter turning stood against the spring.
Yea, few there are who walk the flowering earth,
But here among its fields of asphodel
This windless underworld of dusk and dream
Has more than all the fields of earth could hold,
And all the vastness of the circling sea.

"Besides the beauty of the verse, stately and rich in its calm melodic simplicity, there is envisaged a feeling for the deeper message of life."

"I was impressed with a notice I saw of this drama, by Nathan Haskell Dole," said Psyche, "and I clipped it to paste in my copy of the book. Let me read what it says, because it proves your claim that a contemporary poet can deal with a Greek theme, and yet express the vital problems of life." And turning to the back of her book she read: "'Mr. Ledoux has not been able to escape his modern education. . . . Her grief — Demeter's — is merely the personification of human grief and the death and resurrection of Persephone, like the death and resurrection of the Christ, yearly enacted in almost all modern churches, commemorates the annual death of Autumn and the annual rebirth of Spring. We feel its sadness and we likewise feel

its joy. . . . Mr. Ledoux has given us a volume of genuine melody, of rich thought, and of considerable dramatic possibility.' According to this critic the poet does think about life profoundly and with a clear vision, in spite of his using the vehicle of legendary myth and its characters."

"Mr. Ledoux's achievement is in the handling of the situations which tell the story, and in the superbly wrought verse, spoken by the characters and choruses," I said. "His art is built up with rhythms whose elaborate and grave music is all the more impressive for the simplicity of diction. From beginning to end one feels the consciousness of its architectonic values, the sense of a monumental mood embodied in the fitting materials of speech. But more than this, there is the symbolized mood of human aspiration which the story of Persephone so completely interprets. The poet makes Galatea remark:

> "'A tale I heard that men are cursed with souls:
> But what souls are I know not.'

And Arethusa says,

> "'. . . I have heard
> The soul is hunger ever unappeased.
> And thirst by all earth's fountains unassuaged.'

And Persephone adds,

> "'The soul is darkness waiting for the dawn,
> And, if dawn comes, is day that longs for dusk;
> And now to men as to the soulless beasts
> Is death a sudden stranger.'

But the inner meaning of the poet's vision of Persephone's story is condensed in this chorus of the men and women before the altar at Eleusis:

"'Who from the outer ocean,
Who from the inland sea,
Has the skill to tell,
Though he reason well,
What the soul of man may be?

"'Not from the wheeling planets,
Not in the scroll of earth,
Has the wisest read
How tides are led
Or the stars were brought to birth.

"'Dark is the end of being,
Veiled is the primal cause:
But of life we know
But that ebb and flow
Are ruled by changeless laws.

"'Glimpses are all our vision,
Mystery folds us round:
But the shafted might
Of the spirit's light
Flames on the dark profound,

"'Searches the depth, and brightens,
Soaring from Fate's control:
Nor shall ills that reach
To the life of each
Avail to touch the soul.

"'We whom a famine conquers,
We whom a drought can kill,
Though we mark our years
With a trail of tears,
Are victors, victors still.'

"These stanzas sung by the men and women as they come to the temple at Eleusis, before Persephone and Demeter, embody the poet's conviction of the final triumph of the soul over darkness. The 'Story of Eleusis' means this in substance. Persephone and Demeter, each in her own form and character, symbolize the significance of this fruition to a world of men who must have their ideal in some visible form. The legend has inscribed its signature upon the earth."

"Do you think one can find in any modern lyrical drama songs and choruses to match those in 'The Story of Eleusis'?" asked Cassandra. "I would hazard that not since the chorus beginning 'The hounds of the spring are on winter's traces,' in Swinburne's 'Atalanta in Calydon,' has the poetic drama produced one so beautiful, so stately, so rich in harmony, and elaborately figured, as the 'Hymn to Demeter' chorus in the first act. Let me read it:

"Weave the dance, and raise again the sacred chorus;
Wreathe the garlands of the spring about the hair;
Now once more the meadows burst in bloom before us,
Crying swallows dart and glitter through the air.
Glints the plowshare in the brown and fragrant furrow;

Pigeons coo in shady coverts as they pair;
Come the furtive mountain folk from cave and burrow,
Lean, and blinking at the sunlight's sudden glare.

"Bright through midmost heaven moves the lesser Lion;
Hide the Hyades in ocean-caverns hoar:
Past the shoulders of the sunset flames Orion,
Following the Sisters seaward evermore.
Gleams the east at evening, lit by low Arcturus.
Out to subtle-scented dawns beside the shore.
Yet a little and the Pleiades will lure us:
Weave the dance and raise the chorus as of yore.

"Far to eastward up the fabled gulf of Issus,
Northward, southward, westward, now the trader goes,
Passing headlands clustered yellow with narcissus,
Bright with hyacinth, with poppy, and with rose.
Shines the sea and falls the billows as undaunted,
Past the rising of the stars that no man knows,
Sails he onward through the islands siren-haunted,
Till the clashing gates of rock before him close.

"Kindly Mother of the beasts and birds and flowers,
Gracious bringer of the barley and the grain,
Earth awakened feels thy sunlight and thy showers;
Great Demeter! Let us call thee not in vain.
Lead us safely from the seedtime to the threshing,
Past the harvest and the vineyard's purple stain;
Let us see thy corn-pale hair the sunlight meshing,
When the sounding flails of autumn swing again.

"Such an achievement is rare enough in contemporary poetry to be highly prized," I said. "The gift of 'The Story of Eleusis' is a gift of beauty, and it is so supremely a gift of beauty, because through it stream rays of vision embodied in an art of melodic and figured speech."

XI

THE JEST OF DEMOCRACY

The origin of a dispute is one of the most mysterious things in human experience, and I can no more tell how the argument arose than I can tell what the final agreement was. Psyche's dog brought it to an end, of that I am sure. His circling antics up the road drew our attention, and we started on the run to find out what had happened to the poor creature. We arrived to find him writhing in the throes of a fit. Every other thought vanished but the thought of what to do to help the poor fellow. Hardly before the first-aid thought of water had come to the surface of our action, the little fellow staggered to his feet, and dashed down the road like an arrow.

"A running fit," exclaimed Psyche. "He'll drop dead in the woods, poor fellow."

The dog had now vanished from sight in the woods about half a mile up the road. Jason and I were for following him, but both Psyche and Cassandra agreed it would be useless. It was Cassandra who brought us back to our argument by illustrating the dog's condition.

"There's a bit of humor in that dog's situation," she explained. "It's based on a tragic note, which gives it a touch of the true comic

spirit. It's a satire on our treatment of the animal; for, after days of chained confinement, the reaction of his first freedom in the sun is to lose his wits; and the wit of the situation is, that he goes flying down the road in search of the senses he has lost."

We had started back, a little uneasy about the dog's whereabouts and condition; and reaching our pine, settled to our task of discussing the week's poets.

"You define four aspects of humor, then," Jason summed up Cassandra's remarks. "Humor, comedy, satire, and wit," he enumerated. "Each having a special point of view, but really from the same root-consciousness."

"Are they not rather four expressions of the comic spirit?" I suggested. "After all, our moods are pretty sharply defined into the tragic and comic. There is scarcely any blend of the two producing a neutral mood. The comic is the higher, and more difficult to attain. It appeals more widely and deeply to humanity, because it gathers up the essences of tragic experience, and shows the temporariness of grief."

"And have you noticed how one phase — if we accept your four aspects — of the comic spirit becomes a lost art every now and then?" asked Psyche. "Yet I wonder if a really fine satiric poem would appeal to our modern civilization. Mr. Frankau, who has lately given us a war poem in 'A Song of the Guns,' wrote a couple of satiric narratives a few years ago, which fell rather

flat over here. Not quite so flat as these Kiplingese war verses in 'A Song of the Suns' deserve to fall, but winning nowhere near the attention they deserved as a satire on modern English and American life. Can the full-toned raillery of Byron's 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' or 'Don Juan,' or 'A Vision of Judgment,' ever return to English verse on either side of the ocean?"

"It is apparent," said Jason, "that the attempt, at least, has been made over here. Don't you think 'The Fledgling Bard and the Poetry Society' an attempt of earnest dimensions? See what the subject offers. And Mr. Margetson, very much after the manner of the eighteenth century English satirists, takes the liberty of pasturing his muse in a variety of fields. His poem is, I admit, a kind of anomaly. He has the satirist's power to manipulate rhymes, which is half the conquest of thought in such a poem. He takes an aspiring poet who believes, if he can but reach and be received into the sacred organization of the Poetry Society of America, his name and fame will be won. It is a little vague from just what direction he starts on his pilgrimage, but there is no vagueness about the divers experiences and questions that interest him on the way. He tells us, at the beginning, that,

"'I'm out to find the new, the modern school,
Where Science trains the fledgling hard to fly,
Where critics teach the ignorant, the fool,

To write the stuff the editors would buy:
It matters not e'en tho it be a lie,—
Just so it aims to smash tradition's crown
And build up one instead decked with a new renown.

" ' A thought is haunting me by night and day,
And in some safe archive I seek to lay it;
I have some startling thing I wish to say,
And they can put me wise just how to say it.
Without their aid, I, like the ass, must bray it,
Without due knowledge of its mood and tense,
And so 'tis sure to fail the bard to recompense.

" ' Will some kind one direct me to that college
Where every budding genius now is headed,
The only source to gain poetic knowledge,
Where all the sacred truths lay deep imbedded,
Where nothing but the genuine goods are shredded,—
The factory where shape new feet and meters
That make poetic symbols sound like carpet beaters.' "

" This young bard," I commented, " is quite mistaken if he expects to find the Poetry Society a ' factory where they shape new feet and meters,' making ' poetic symbols sound like carpet beaters.' The organization as a whole is quite opposed to new forms. Masters and Frost, Amy Lowell and Alfred Kreymborg are anathema to its faith in the sacred traditions of English verse. The prize poem, ' The Child in Me,' is the standard

it has set up. He should go to Brookline, or out to Chicago or St. Louis to feel the new impulse. New York has it only to the extent with which these other places give it to her. Why, Gramercy Park is more provincial than Heath Street, with its stone walls and shade trees."

"I am more interested in what this young bard thinks of modern society," Psyche informed us. "He has a great deal to say about Billy Sunday, the Negro problem, the Democratic and Republican campaigns, Christian Science, baseball, prize-fighting, and the war. It seems he is obsessed with some of these subjects."

"I am afraid we can't go through all his ramifications on those topics," I said, "but I do want to quote this rather delicious exposition on the various religious sects. It is a kind of interlude in the poem:

"Or win or lose come my kind muse,
And tune for me a merry ditty;
Sing it true, come won't you, do?
And yet it seem a sin and pitty.

"Christian Science hurls defiance,
At the Doctor and disease,
Holy Jumpers quaff their bumpers
And hug and kiss just as they please.

"Universalist, wash foot Baptists,
Wesleyans and Moravianites,
Play their antics like old frantics,
And assert religious rights.

"Zionists, ho! holy jingo!
Fight to take Jerusalem;
They take an oath to break the Sabbath,
Yet they take no stock in ham.

"Methodists play games and whist,
Go to dances, cast their vote;
Catholics rule politics,
And get the Presbyterians' goat.

"In such queer divisions of Christian religions.
Where men curse and steal and fight,
Join the free Salvation Army,
For the soul's serene delight."

Jason was immensely amused. He tossed his arms in the air and shouted, "The Salvation Army for mine! That settles the question — or, at least, the fledgling bard has settled it for me — a final entry into heaven to the accompaniment of a big brass drum."

"Don't blaspheme a great inspiration like that," scolded Psyche. "If you are thinking — and I know you are — of Mr. Lindsay's poem on General William Booth, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to tag the thought of it on the satiric, ridiculously satiric, lines of the fledgling bard."

"But I insist we see the bard to the end of his pilgrimage; his hope attained," I said. "So I am going to quote these three stanzas at the end of the poem:

"Behold a shower of light upon the way.
Dear sight, that's where the sacred mansion stands.

It shines just like a dollar, bright as day,
And quite a brilliant circle it commands.
Methinks I hear the playing of the bands
And see the muses dancing in a row.
Then blow ye merry bards, your pipes triumphant blow.

"Where is the man who knows the entrance way,
The usher-bard purged with the christening flame,
The keeper of the guard by night or day
Who leads new lights into the hall of fame,
Where I may play the universal game
A member of this great society
And learn to read and write the modern poetry?

"What blinding brilliance! 'tis the Imagists,
That grand illustrious galaxy of stars.
Their flood of light rolls back the frosty mists
In rainbow folds that match the veil of Mars.
This is the club; they leap in glad hurrahs
To greet their leader Pound, the Master wit.
This is the school, the class, and here is where I fit."

"It is too absurd," laughed Psyche in spite of herself.

"Oh, not at all," Jason differed, with a countenance solemn as Job, but behind which I knew he was repressing an explosive laughter. "It's the most serious thing I've read about that missionary institution."

Jason soon settled, however, into a thoughtful mood. Suddenly he exclaimed, "But what is American humor coming to? Shades of Saxe, Artemus Ward, Bill Nye, 'Gene Field, Josh

Billings, and the rest, where are your progeny?" he appealed to the unanswering air.

"Oh, there's humor aplenty," I said, "but there's precious little English or American humor in America. English humor died in New England when the abolitionist movement was born, and American humor died on the Western plains when the cowboy became a circus spectacle. Between James Russell Lowell and Walt Mason," I went on, "American humorous verse became a valley into which the streams of every national humor ran. Our humor is not indigenous, but cosmopolitan. The brotherhood of man finds its fruition in America, but not in social justice, nor political equality, but in the evolution of humor. It is the jest of democracy. I needn't prove my contention by naming names, you are too well acquainted with the facts of popular humor of the past decade or two."

"Yes; you are right," Jason agreed. "Those names are rooted in the ancient lands of Palestine, Africa and Ireland. It is a curious fact that these three races, the Jew, the Negro, and the Irish, have supplied American literature with its best humor. I suppose it is because they have had the most tragic racial histories. The English who settled at Jamestown brought along with their other characteristics, gayety, and they brought with them when they settled at Plymouth thirteen years later conscience, but the contribution of England to the new colonies in the western world was short of humor."

"But Bridges is a good English name," said Cassandra. "And Madeline Bridges has long had an established reputation as a writer of light humorous verse. Her new book 'The Open Book' quite sustains that reputation."

"You call *vers de société* humorous verse?" asked Jason. "Brander Matthews defines it as 'familiar verse,' and even so takes no credit for a literal definition. Madeline Bridges seems to me to write *vers de société*."

"Well, whatever you call it, here is a good example named 'Between the Lines,'" and Psyche read:

"Dear Mr. Raymond, (Dearest Ned!)
My mother wishes I should write
(She does not wish it half as much
As *I* do, darling!) to invite

"Your presence at bridge whist, (Of course,
You hate it, dear — I'm glad you do!)
On Wednesday evening. She has planned
A pleasant party (I have, too!)

"And hopes you'll come, if not engaged.
(Of course you will! I mean to get
Old Hodge and Mrs. Winks to fill
Our places — yours and mine!) Please let

"Dear Mama know if she may count
Upon your coming (Yes, she *may*).
She sends her very best regards,
And I am (more than I can say),
Sincerely yours,
J. E. Van Ness.
(Your little, loving girlie, Jess!)

"This has a neater turn," Jason followed, reading 'His Answer':

"'Before you ask my vow,' she said,
'Dear, listen to this word:
You're not the first man I have loved,
Nor second,— nay — nor third.'

"'Am I the fourth or fifth,' he asked
With scorn, 'or were there more?'
'Now, don't be hurt and grieved,' she sighed —
'But, as I said before —

"''Tis not my first love, dear,— but hark!'—
He felt her gentle touch —
'I promise it shall be *my last:*
Now — can you say as much?'

"A silence fell — upon her hand
He bowed his manly head.
'My love,' he said —'my own — my bride!'—
But — that was *all* he said!"

"And what do you make of 'Cat's Cradle, Songs Grave and Gay,' by H. Stanley Haskins?" I asked.

"He's a very clever fellow," Jason replied.

"I mean what kind of a humorous poet would you call him — good, bad, or just passable?" I insisted.

"Suppose we sample him and find out?" suggested Cassandra.

"Very well," agreed Jason; "then I'll begin with 'The Feminist Alphabet (Compiled by an

agnostic),' which I am not so sure you'll approve of." This last phrase was meant for Cassandra, who was devoted to the 'cause.' With inimitable wit, Jason read:

"A is for ANTIS — the allies of sin,
Who scourge Suffragitis with horrible din.

"B is for BALLOT — the sceptre which rules,
Not granted to Women, ex-convicts or fools.

"C is for CHILD LABOR (let plutocrats gloat),
How long would it last if Mothers could vote?

"D is for DUTY men owe to their Wives,
To give them the vote — then repent all their lives.

"E is for EQUALITY — sought at the polls
By feminine creatures with masculine souls.

"F is for FRANCHISE —'Tis plain to be seen
They'll have it, God bless 'em, by nineteen steen steen.

"G is for GIRLS — whenever they start
They'll vote with their head — but more with their heart.

"H is for HUSBAND with resolute jaw,
Who, when you have children, is required by law.

"I is for INFANT — asleep in her crib,
Deprived of a vote through descent from a rib.

"J is for JUSTICE which Women pursue;
They obey all the laws — why not make just a few?

"K is for KERBSTONE — where humble men stand
And watch suffrage pageants keep step with the band.

"L is for LADIES — chock full of hard knocks
For the masculine voter, while darning his socks.

"M is for MANACLES — fetters which years
Have forged on the wrists of the Women, poor dears!

"N is for NATIONS — learning at last
That shy, shrinking Woman's a thing of the Past.

"O is for OAK — once for clinging vines suited,
But strong grew the vine, so the tree's been uprooted.

"P is for PAPA — once head of the house,
But since Mother voted as meek as a mouse.

"Q is for QUIBBLE — dare any man state
That Suffragettes do it when pressed in debate?

"R is for REVERENCE which decent man shows
To his charming and arduous suffragist foes.

"S is for SEX — which being made double
Is really the mainspring of all of this trouble.

"T is for TAXES which Woman must pay,
Concerning their uses she's nothing to say.

"U is for UNION — for thus, hand in hand,
Queen Man and King Woman united should stand.

"V is for VOTING — what feminine bliss
Except perhaps flirting, is greater than this?

"W is for WOMAN — the Mother of men,
But without any fathers, Mrs. Woman, what then?

"X is for XANTHIPPE — quite set, as you know,
Did she, too, root for suffrage, so long, long ago?

"Y is for YOKE — such as dumb cattle wear,
Let him who'd grind Woman to earth have a care!

"Z is for ZENITH (no more 'don'ts' and 'can'ts')
When Woman will stalk through the World wearing 'pants'!"

"Well, I hope the suffrage organizations won't adopt that poem for a constitution," Cassandra remarked, when Jason finished.

"They could do worse," Jason retorted.

"Come, come," I cried, "neither of you are doing justice to Mr. Haskins as a humorist. Now, personally I think, he hits off a humorous situation with true distinction. I am going to read 'The Tragedy,' which presents a most amusing incident:

"The shoemaker sat
With his rat-a-tat-tat,
While fitting my shoes with new soles, new soles,
And there stocking footed
I sat as if rooted
With holes in my socks, blooming holes, holes, holes.
Alas, what a sin to
Look out through the window

And see Mary passing, my sweet, my sweet,
  But how could I hollo
  And how could I follow
With holes in my socks and no shoes on my feet?
  I begged the shoemaker,
  The blooming old faker,
To give back my shoes, without soles, without heels,
  But though they weren't done, he
  Demanded the money
And turned a deaf ear to my frantic appeals.
  So off down the street,
  On her dainty, small feet,
Walked Mary, sweet Mary, with swift graceful stride,
  And but for the shocking
  Large holes in my stocking
For sure, without shoes, I'd 'a' walked at her side."

"Sort of blows through you like a clean wind, doesn't it?" remarked Cassandra.

"Wholesome and sweet. Mr. Haskins sees the humors of life in the commonest incidents," Jason commented.

"Yes," I replied; "his verse is something if we had a name for it, that corresponds to the homespun verse of a generation ago. Rag mats and crazy quilts were of the homespun period. Mr. Haskins' humorous muse is of the period of mission furniture and gas mantles — she's quite a modern lady."

"A parodist on life," declared Jason.

"That's one thing life can't be — parodied," Psyche contested. "It is only literature that lends itself to parody."

"But I differ with you, Psyche, though I won't argue the point," Jason held to his belief. "I suppose you think that only cynics hold that literature is mostly a parody on life."

"Cynics don't hold to anything but their egotism," Psyche rebuked.

"Oh, really, I'm not as bad as that, am I?" beseeched Jason. "But do you think Mr. Untermeyer is cynical in his parodies?"

"Of course not," broke in Cassandra.

"No, but a trifle satirical," added Psyche.

"But you'll admit he strikes a posture," Jason countered.

"I'll not admit anything of the kind. He makes a gesture, but that's quite a different thing from a posture," replied Psyche.

"Oh, it comes to the same thing in the flourish," Jason satisfied himself.

"Parody is an art, whether it is on life or literature," I interpolated, "and very few have succeeded in it. It seems to be more effective in the form of verse. And poets, because I suppose they are more sharply defined in their characteristic qualities, appear more susceptible to parody. We have, however, carried verse parodies to a farcical extent, and seldom to the heights of critical comedy. Burlesque has been deprived of the exquisite refinement which is, or should be, a part of its nature. It is sadly serious the way we have tried to be seriously funny. Our means have been apt, but we have managed to tinge it a little too coarsely; to rub the bloom which a satiric mood

should possess in the first careless rapture of striking at a foible, or of copying a manner. We have been rich in humor, but poor in wit. Parody can get along very well without humor, but it dies if there is no wit in it. Humor is like a yardstick, but wit is like a chemical. Therefore a fool may be humorous, but only a genius can be a wit. Humor may be an inspiration of life, and therefore a silly thing of fine flavor and elaborate adornment; but wit is analytic, like an acid, maybe, or a perfume, with the quality of an essence: distilled in the spirit it gives to thought a keen and penetrating power. It uncovers like a flash of lightning whatever it strikes."

"I'd like to quote against what you say," Jason addressed me, "what Mr. Untermeyer says in his prefatory note to his volume of parodies. 'Parody,' said someone, and it must have been G. K. Chesterton, 'is the critic's half-holiday.' . . . 'Far from converting virtue into a paradox and degrading truth by ridicule' (I am quoting Isaac Disraeli), 'parody will only strike at what is chimerical and false; it is not a piece of buffoonery so much as a critical exposition.' Casting about for something between an apology and an air of dignity, the parodist usually fishes up phrases like the foregoing ones. Or, if he has an educative turn of mind (and he generally has) he prefaces his collection with a disquisition on the various forms and classes of parody; pointing out the difference between the mere burlesque of sound and the subtler (and more critical) parody

of sense. After which the reader is rather sharply told that the latter form is the only one worth serious consideration. The reader is also given to understand, in a coy and surprisingly modest last sentence, that the present parodist employs only this more elevated and illuminating method."

"But in the very next sentence Mr. Untermeyer modestly disclaims any success in carrying out this method," I said. "I shall have to restore the confidence of his readers by quoting his confession of attempt. 'I have attempted to parody the thoughts,' he says 'moods and manners of the poets victimized rather than any specific work, and that in only one case did I have a particular poem in mind.' I give him the further credit for sharply dividing the two forms or classes of parody by practising the higher, which fulfils my definition of wit. Mr. Untermeyer by this practise repudiates the 'mere burlesque of sound,' and achieves the 'subtler and more critical parody of sense.'"

"It is interesting how the poet grouped his volume," Jason commented. "Two groups are parodies, and one burlesque. The first and second are 'The Banquet of the Bards,' and 'Attempted Affinities'; the third 'Pierian Handsprings.' The 'Banquet' consists of parodies on twenty-seven contemporary English and American poets, among whom are John Masefield, Edwin Arlington Robinson, William Butler Yeats, Robert Frost, Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters,

Stephen Phillips, Owen Seaman, Gilbert K. Chesterton, William Watson, Sara Teasdale, Franklin P. Adams, Amy Lowell, Rudyard Kipling, Alfred Noyes, Austin Dobson, and Witter Bynner. Here is a unique performance. Mr. Untermeyer is a critic of insight, and he gets the sense in the thought, mood, and manner of these poets; he is a poet of expressive, subtle forms, and he gets their individual rhythmic qualities with extraordinary similarity. The 'Attempted Affinities' is quite a new idea in parodical literature, a striking and original combination of the critical fancy. In these Heinrich Heine and Clinton Scollard, Andrew Lang and Oscar Wilde, Shelley and Laurence Hope, Herrick and Horace, Robert Browning and Austin Dobson, Swinburne and F. Locker-Lampson, Keats and Madison Cawein, William Ernest Henley and François Villon, Poe and the Pre-Raphaelite poets, with Ben Jonson and Harry E. Smith, collaborate in making verses."

"It must be because Mr. Untermeyer reveres these poets that he pays them the compliment of crystallizing their most individual qualities in the art of parody."

"Oh, yes; I believe that is true," I said. "But these parodies are really an art. Somehow pure poetry cannot escape expression even when Mr. Untermeyer wittily attires himself in the verbal and mental garments of another poet. I don't think he is always successful in his imitation, as for instance in the case of Masefield; and if his

own figure breaks through he cannot be otherwise than exquisitely poetical, as when he writes:

"One morning when the sun was high
And larks were cleaving the blue sky,
Singing as though their hearts would break
With April's keen and happy ache."

"The parodies on Edwin Arlington Robinson and Robert Frost are the most successful," asserted Cassandra. "Don't you think he gets the real thing through, in making the former tell 'What He Knew of Simple Simon,' and the latter relate 'The Death of the Tired Man'?"

Jason, who had a liking for parody, began reading the one on Robinson:

"What does it matter — who are we to say
How much is clear and how much there must be
Behind his mystical directness — see,
He left us smiling, and a bit astray.
Yet there were times when Simon would convey
A cryptic sharpness, etched with something free;
For he was touched with fire and prophecy,
And we who scarcely knew him, mourn him . . .
Eh?

I'll say this much for Simon: If his ghost
Has half the life of many men, or most,
He will not rest in the ophidian night.
He will come back and storm the western gate,
Scorning such lesser things as Death and Fate. . . .
Well, there is that side, too. . . . You may be
right.

"Vachel Lindsay," Jason went on after reading, "lends himself more easily to parody, and we expect the effect to be more prominent. When Mr. Untermeyer makes him borrow a megaphone and chant the 'Glorious Fourth,' we are prepared for what is coming; though not for that rebuke at the end, which is meant to sting our hypocritical national sentiment. Let me give you a taste of this verse," and Jason read:

"Heard the loud bells, proud bells, spire-bells,
Heard the call bells, hall-bells, fire-bells,
Gay bells, sleigh-bells, night and day bells;
Singing there and swinging there and all together
ringing there:
'Ding-dong — clangaranga — boom, boom-ah.
Ding-dong — clangaranga — boom, boom-ah;
Rejoice, oh people, ye shall live and be
Free and equal in a land made free!'

"*WHAT?*

"'Well, *almost* equal — *almost* free.
Fear no more from tyranny,
But with loud democracy
While the starry symbol waves
In a land of liberty,
Yankees never shall be slaves!'

"Bang, bang; ding-dong — boom, boom-ah;
Clangaranga, clangaranga — sis-boom-bah.
Bang — *Bang* — bang — *bang* — BANG!
Ssshh. . . .
Pop. . . . Pop. . . . Pop. . . .
Bah. . . . !"

"Why, you read it as excitingly as Lindsay would himself," Psyche complimented Jason.

"Oh, no; I'm sure I don't quite get the swing of the head nor the precise courtesy of the fingers embracing, which Mr. Lindsay gets into his reading. It's unique, no one else can do it."

"From 'Harry Graham Adds to His Misrepresentative Men a Picture of J. M. Barrie,' I want to quote two lines, which might, after all, very well be taken as the essence of the subtle art in these parodies," I said, quoting:

"Who burlesques when he most reveres;
And winks an eye — to hide his tears."

"I confess that the book offers many temptations to quote," said Jason. "The parody on Ezra Pound is stunning; it is as good poetry as that antic mind ever made in his most strained and serious effort; and Mr. Untermeyer sings with 'winks in an eye.' . . . Oh, I simply can't refrain," Jason broke out, "I must read this parody on Franklin P. Adams, who 'adds to the gayety of libations by adapting the eleventh ode of the Fourth Book of Horace — 1916 Model!'" and before any of us could speak, Jason was off on the lilt of this motley elegance:

"See, Phyllis, I've a jar of Alban wine,
Made of the choicest grapes that one can gather.
Vintage? Well, yes — its years are more than nine.
Inviting? . . . Rather.

"And that's not all our well-known festive cheer —
There's ivy in the yard, and heaps of parsley.
Come, twine some in your hair — and say, old dear,
Don't do it sparsely.

"The flat's all ready for the sacrifice;
In every corner handy to display it,
There's silver. . . . Yes, the house looks extra nice,
If I *do* say it.

"The very flame is trembling, and the smoke
Goes whirling upward with an eager rustling;
The household's overrun with busy folk.
Just see them hustling!

"What's that? You want to know the cause of this?
Why, it's the birthday of friend P. Mæcenas;
And doubly dear because the season is
Sacred to Venus.

"Some holiday? Some holiday is right!
And — well, my Latin heart and soul are in it.
Therefore I hope you'll be on hand tonight —
Eh? . . . Just a minute.

"Telephus? Pah. He isn't worth a thought —
If Telly dares neglect you, dear, why — let him!
He's nothing but a giddy good-for-nought.
Come and forget him.

"Come, and permit your grief to be assuaged;
Forsake this flirt on whom you have your heart set.
Besides, Dame Rumor hath it he's engaged —
'One of our smart set.'

"From vain desires and too ambitious dreams
The doom of Phaeton's enough to scare you. . . .
This is — ahem — my favorite of themes —
But, dear, I spare you.

"Come then, so that the evening may not lack
Your voice that makes each heart a willing rover:
And, as we sing, black Care will grow less black —
Oh, come on over.

"Rather does the thing, doesn't it?" was Jason's tag to his reading.

"To have a serious poet, the passionate singer of beauty and humanity of such poems as are in the collection 'Challenge,' try his hand, and succeed so conspicuously, on themes and in a manner here presented, lifts parody into the creative sisterhood of poetic art. It is," I concluded, "one more aspect of our poetic growth and development."

"That's growing to be an old wives' tale," laughed Psyche as we came out on the road, and returned to The Farm.

XII

FOOTNOTES TO REALITY

Over the fields and woods was a spirit in the air which had been gradually settling for days past, and we felt it keenly. The landscape had grown aloof and watchful; you noticed it more clearly if you arose early in the morning, when all the grass and trees were under a blanket of thick, glistening dew. Was it dew or mist? It did not melt then, as in midsummer, but blew away with almost a visible rush. There was a sharpness in the air that nibbled at one's imagination. The mountain to the northwest of The Farm lifted its head of cold gray blue against the flat surface of a sky which sharpened every shadow and outline. I had stayed over night this week at The Farm to finish some work which I fancied would be better done than in the noisy distraction of the town. I noticed, on my early walk, that as the sun rose higher and higher in the heavens, the earth passed through a number of sudden and visible moods. Instead of that peaceful mood of midsummer which accompanies the progress of the forenoon, the countryside grew restless and melancholy in turn, almost taking shape and action, giving one the impression that Nature had as-

sumed wild, faun-like emotions. In the glinting sunlight you could almost see the troubled, alert eyes of a faun; and woods, hills and valleys were as its shaggy limbs, trying to evade some mysterious spirits. The feeling one has cannot be described; one can only make fanciful conjectures. There is little that is so illusory about the coming of autumn. The tinge of sadness which everywhere touches the ripeness of things, gives a tone of vibrancy to Nature which is provocative. Its effect upon human emotion is thrilling, though in a subdued key.

I had gone up to The Farm the night before and after tea had put in the hours till midnight on some work. Jason came up earlier than usual the next day, for an extra hour, as he said, to watch the sharp noon sunshine mellow into afternoon. "It is all in the tilt of the shadows," he explained. He stood on the porch looking towards the east. "I can't describe the process but I seem to feel a pulse that beats out there in the grass," he added, "and I know the earth has made another swing of the pendulum, and ticked somewhere thousands of miles beneath its surface. The first signs of that tree's shadow," he pointed to the apple-tree across the road, "lengthening eastward is the registering of the earth's orientation on an immense scale. And I feel it all here," he said, tapping his breast, "like a soft, seductive memory."

Later when we were going up the Derry Road on our way to the grove I discovered how deeply

we had all fallen under the spell of Jason's mood. The place was very still, all the live and enchanting sounds of midsummer having passed with the migration of the tuneful birds. Splashes of color were everywhere becoming more prominent in the trees. As we reached the cemetery at the top of the road we stopped to look upon the crumbling stones the weather had beaten with sun and rain and wind for a hundred years or more. Leaning against the fence that enclosed the cemetery Jason began quoting some lines that ran like this:

"Set on this hill encircled by the woods,
Dreamless in death, the dead sleep here!
Nature around them in her changing moods,
Remembers, though we forget, who held them dear.

"I half believe we envy them their rest,
We who miss, and fumble, grasp and lose the prize:
Man betrays us living, but Nature's bounteous breast,
Takes and soothes and nurses our tired hearts and eyes."

"Whose verse is that?" asked Psyche.

"Oh, I wanted to say something for this quiet spot which I have been passing all summer," answered Jason.

"You have said something beautiful for it," Psyche praised him. "And I am glad because this cemetery was on our land. My ancestors gave this ground for a burial place in the eight-

eenth century. It has been terribly neglected for a long time now. When father died the town folk thought it strange we didn't bury him here. But I like your poem so much."

Jason did not seem to hear what Psyche had said. He was wrapped in a pensive mood. Presently he began to quote again. We heard these lines:

"Turn me to my yellow leaves,
I am better satisfied;
There is something in me grieves
That was never born, and died.
Let me be a scarlet flame
On a windy autumn morn,
I who never had a name,
Nor from a breathing image born.
From the margin let me fall
Where the faintest stars sink down,
And the void consumes me,— all
In nothingness to drown.
Let me dream my dream entire,
Withered as an autumn leaf —
Let me have my vain desire,
Vain, as it is brief."

"What a hopelessly melancholy mood," said Psyche tenderly. "What has come over you, Jason?"

"All this life that we live, this experience that we have of the world, are nothing but foot-notes to reality. That is what your neglected cemetery made me realize. So many things that seem vital and serious in this world are merely commentaries

on a text we cannot read. These things are in our own tongue — these trees, this road, that goldenrod, the cattle in the fields, man everywhere, the hills amidst which he roams, the cities that he builds, the seas around him and the sky overhead — these, I repeat, are in his own tongue, but they are only foot-notes to a text in an unknown language. Ever since the beginning man has tried to translate the language of the spirit — the invisible, immaterial characters of another existence that is as real as our own. And the best he has ever been able to do is to reproduce symbols, to imitate signs, and create visions out of the substances of his imagination without ever having a clear and convincing revelation."

We moved on in silence reflecting on these remarks of Jason's. I felt a sense of something vanishing away; the solid appearance of the ground, the trees, of objects all about us; and of other things coming into material existence, strange and luminous images from another world. I could see the yellow September sunshine streaking the shadowy depths of the woods, a radiance that poured through from some mythical source beyond the margin of time. Cassandra, I could see, was plainly puzzled at an influence she could not resist, and yet against which she would not strive through speech. Psyche gave herself up to the spell completely, and walked as one accredited with secrets. Jason had absolute dominion over the mystery that had so moved him, and all of us

might have been ghosts so insensible did he seem to anything earthly.

It was almost by instinct that we reached and settled ourselves upon the ground under our chosen pine boughs. Perhaps it was the singing of the brook not far away, or it may have been a cone dropping upon the ground breaking the silence around us, or it may have been the sudden and solitary note of some passing bird — or again it may have been none of these things but a current of mental reaction flashing through the four of us at once — that broke the spell. We became conscious of the silence, and with a shade of embarrassment four voices fell into conversation sounding like a confusion of sentences. I can recollect no sense of what was said except my own remark, which sounded detached and furtive. The humor of the situation became clear and everyone laughed.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Jason; "what a bore it is to be serious. It is a private virtue that ought never to become a public nuisance. When it does, it proves the decay of happiness."

"The decay of happiness brings about the restoration of idealism," I declared.

"You are both talking nonsense," Cassandra censured.

"Please!" begged Psyche. "Don't spoil it."

"Spoil what?" asked Jason.

"The adventure. Pulling down a handful of stars. We don't reach too often, and when we

do, let's keep the sense of it, the thrilling sense of joy that it gives."

"But to fall back empty-handed, Psyche; don't you think of that? Such a performance is ridiculous — and hurts," said Jason.

"I prefer to think that some of us feel as Winifred Maynard expresses it in that brief poem 'Invocation.' She sings,

"Come to me, Passion, and shake me!
Anger or Hatred or Love,
Take me and mold me or break me;
Come from below or above,
Lift me to heaven or cast me to hell,
Whirl me through outermost space —
So thou remove me from this where I dwell,
Plane of the gray commonplace!"

"Thank you, Psyche," I said. "You have brought us to a sense of our responsibility. I want to talk about Winifred Maynard. Her book has interested me very much; her identity has been a source of much speculation.

"Fifteen years ago," I continued, "an English lady had published two volumes of exquisite poems. They were named 'Units' and 'Fugitives.' The poems were crystals of the most glittering illusions, gems of the first water. I do not know anyone of the past fifteen years, in England, who intellectualized emotion, who trans-substantiated the vaguest and most elusive moods and visions, into such recognizable forms, as this poet. She had an intuition that was literally flashing;

it flashed into the dark corners of every kind of personal mystery; or upon common sights, such as a landscape or a flower; it extracted always the crises, where the invisible and dissolving elements converged with tangible appearances. Her art was an abstraction that became a reality; so much so that wonder was a mere threshold across which she came and went between the inner and outer sense of the world. Like all great spiritual artists — Blake, or Emily Dickinson, for instance — the method was always towards compression in her poems. This method is essential to the poet who attempts to seize and hold the sudden and escapable fact of mystery: to catch, as it were, the inspiration — so like a butterfly — in a closely-woven net of words. Her poems were snatches, often fragments; but only these as the shattered parts of a great wave. The expression was as perfect as form could be. To every word and rhythm and rhyme was given its exact value in color, melody, and emotional force. Behind them was a living power as that which in the sea drives the wave. I have never seen the dawn these past fifteen years without recalling how this poet caught for me, in a phrase, the mighty impressiveness of that diurnal movement. She said the dawn was the 'visible delay of day.'

"This lady," I continued, "was Winifred Lucas, who later became Madame du Ballay. She vanished from poetic activity. I believe she was a sister of Mr. E. V. Lucas, whose delightful essays, novels and compilations have won him a

warm place in the affections of readers. If this poet was his sister, she seems to have fallen entirely out of the recollection of the public. It is a little puzzling that no one seems to remember her; and it is a pity because her art is exquisite in workmanship and has a visionary quality full of sparkling evocations."

"And you think that Winifred Maynard may be Winifred Lucas?" asked Jason.

"When I opened the 'Book of Winifred Maynard' and read that 'the author of this book, who is now dead, was a real woman, although Winifred Maynard was not her real name,'" I replied, "I caught at the fancy that these poems might be by the English lady of whom I have spoken. Reading the poems, it was hard not to be convinced by such a poem as 'To a Cyclamen' or 'The Reason,' both of which I am going to read in the order named." I then gave the first, which ran:

"Purple five-winged butterfly,
  Poised on slender stem,
Springing when the winds pass by,
  Wild to be with them —
Canst thou solve the riddle I
Ask myself, and asking sigh?

"What I would be, that I know;
  What I am, I feel:
Up my soul would striving go
  Till the light unseal
All its close-shut wonders — still
Strength is wanting to the will.

"Thou wast prisoned in the earth,
Thou hast left thy bed,
Risen up to life and mirth,
Come as from the dead;
All thy being is complete —
Wilt not tell thy secret, sweet?

"Was it that the mighty Sun
From his place on high
With a warm swift magic won
Where thou, weak, didst lie?
Drew thee up, by gentle spell,
Nearer to himself to dwell?

"Would that thus a mighty Love,
Down through time and space
Reaching, might fulfil whereof
Hints thine aery grace —
Draw me up from cold and gloom
Into light and warmth and bloom!"

I next read "The Reason":

"I do not hate the woman
Between my Love and me,
Whose right in him is guarded
With due formality;

"Yet her I would not pity
And I would bid him come,
Had I not seen her little child —
But now desire is dumb.

"Her little son, that should be mine,
Looked up in startled wise,

And 'Who are you?' he said to me,
His father in his eyes.

"There are numerous other resemblances," I added; "the response of both poets to low-lying planes of communication, where commonplace facts meet and merge with intimations of mystery. Either poet might have written this phrase — which happens to be from Winifred Maynard's book —'I feel the cold shiver of spiritual things.' It is typical of an attitude in both poets, which finds it difficult to reconcile contemplation and experience. The line occurs in a poem called 'Instinct and Reason,' a rather brave and frank examination of the poet's faith. The poem also has a certain eerie quality which is less impressive with fear than defiance." Then I read:

"(The black night is falling from a cold gray sky,
And the wild wind is calling as he passes by;
He whistles 'Follow,' and upon his track
Through the darkness hollow speeds a demon pack!)

"Thus and thus the poet saith:
Pleasant words are these,
And their music murmureth
Like a meadow breeze —
Life is laughter; as for Death,
It is dreamless ease.

"(The spirits in prison are loosed for to-night —
From their graves they are risen; their steps are so light
The long churchyard grasses bend not to their tread,
As to and fro passes the Dance of the Dead!)

"Is it not a foolish thing,
Day and night to fret
Over that which Time must bring:
And more foolish yet,
Load the happy Present's wing
With an old Regret?

"(The window was darkened — what was That
looked in?
Sure it stopped and hearkened, seeking for its kin;
Moving in the curtain Something took its place —
Ah, but I am certain once I knew that face!)

"As for angel or for ghost,
God and heaven and hell,
Such are nothing more at most
Than a tale we tell;
Let the fool believe — thy boast,
Reason balanced well.

"(The darkness is burning behind me with eyes;
It needs not my turning — I know otherwise;
The air is aquiver with rustle of wings,
And I feel the cold shiver of spiritual things!)"

"As a woman," said Cassandra, "I am particularly interested in the revelation this poet-woman makes of her soul-history. She divides her poems into three groups, and calls them 'Asleep,' 'Dreaming,' and 'Awake.' They have the significance of informing the reader that this woman's life was a gradual transformation through which the current of her experience passed from aspiration to assumption. From seventeen to thirty the

poems were written, so the short prefatory note tells us. It is singularly interesting to observe that the final group of poems, the poems that have that assumptive quality to which I referred, dwells upon the vicissitudes of love. In these I find a heart-breaking story; not one of common disillusion, of passion, of unfulfilment. They accomplish what few such recitals accomplish, and that is an understanding, the understanding of a soul whom life has hurt, but has made more perfect in the hurting. And through it the stain which offended morality bestows upon such an experience, is somehow washed away by the purity and strength of passion. Such a poem as 'Saint Catherine,' in which the spotless virginity of the saint is made ashamed by the pitiful ghosts, who whisper their humanity to her in a dream, this poem is a striking example of the daring truth this poet is not afraid to speak. Neither pity nor charity should we offer to this figure of truth in her mournful and abandoned circumstance; but sympathy and fellowship. Let the poet speak for that great company of sisters whom the world blames living and canonizes dead." And Cassandra read:

"White Saint Catherine stirred in her sleep,
Moved in her maiden bed,
For ghosts came stealing from darkness deep,
Bending above her head;

"Ghosts of women loving and loved —
Love was their only vow —

Each at her breast had a burden that moved,
And a brand upon her brow.

"White Saint Catherine frowned in her sleep:
'Why do you come to me,
You who have lost what I straitly keep,
Spotless virginity?'

"White Saint Catherine sighed full deep;
'But what are those you bear,
By the warmth of your bosoms lulled asleep;
And that — beneath your hair?'

"White Saint Catherine wept in her sleep:
'Black was your sin, no doubt,
But surely the pain of your shame was deep,
And tears may wash it out.'

"Then turned the ghosts, all whispering
Like wind in the poplar leaves:
'What words are these from this poor pale thing?
It is for us she grieves!

"'Truly our fingers were bare of rings,
But we have not done amiss;
We obeyed the voice of the eldest of things,
The Life that was and is.

"'Truly the pain of our shame was great,
And the brand the world has set —
The world we travailed to recreate —
Is on our foreheads yet;

"'But the pain of our shame is long since past,
And we are comforted —
For that which we gave we still hold fast,
And dying we are not dead!'

"And again and again," continued Cassandra, "in poems like 'The Barren Stock,' 'Answer,' 'But in the Night,—' 'A Sapphic,' and 'The Slave,' this woman-poet lays bare the living, quivering soul of a woman. The entire history of her own personal passion is inscribed in these lines on 'Tomorrow':

"Now I will forget all passion and put aside all pain,
And peace in the former fashion shall visit my soul again;
I will have done with turning old memories o'er and o'er,
And done with the fruitless yearning to look on one face once more;
The thought shall no longer hurt me of the living bar between,
For I will be brave and assert me, now that the world grows green.

"Now I will look out on the growing and see how good it is,
The green and the gold just showing under the April kiss,
The white magnolia flower against a dreamy sky,
And the soft slow-dripping shower, a veil drawn gently by —
These are the drug for sorrow and I will drink them deep:
I will drink them deep to-morrow; till then I desire to weep."

"'These poems,'" followed Cassandra, quoting from the foreword to "The Book of Winifred

Maynard," " ' were written for herself, and shown to a very few people.' Whoever," I added, " is responsible for their publication, has done a wise thing. Life, evidently, was very real to Winifred Maynard, and her poetry shows it. I think they will find many readers to appreciate and admire them, and who will have no little curiosity about the woman who wrote them. She is dead, but her spirit is made vividly alive in these transcriptions of her experience, and she will always live in the personal history of these lovely and touching poems."

As soon as I had stopped speaking, Psyche began quoting these lines:

" Out of my living
Grew my songs.
Back I am giving
What life gave to me.
Unto the sower
The harvest belongs.
Earth keeps the vision
Of harvests to be."

" A testament of life and living," exclaimed Jason. " Those lines of Miss Burr which serve as a postlude to her volume indicate the preoccupation of most of our women poets in America. The men, to quote David O'Neil's phrase, are chiefly concerned with ' the frankness of desire,' but the women are full of the frankness of living. Suppose you give us a little lecture on Miss Burr's poetry," suggested Jason. " You know I caught a glimpse of her once in Rome, travelling with her

mother. I think it was the same year I ran across Louis V. Ledoux and his charming wife in Italy just before they started for Spain, and he told of having met A. E. Housman of the 'Shropshire Lad,' on a train, and that the Englishman confessed that the only American poet he knew was Witter Bynner. . . . But I am rambling on while Psyche and Cassandra are patiently waiting to hear what you have to say about Miss Burr's poetry."

"Why do you elect me to lecture, as you call it, about Miss Burr's poetry?" I asked Jason. "Don't you like her work? And you, too," I addressed Psyche and Cassandra in turn.

"Of course, we do," they answered in chorus. And then Jason added: "But you talk about it with such enthusiasm, that you make us see qualities that might escape us. Your whole attitude towards criticism is a personal discovery, and it is based upon an enthusiasm so intense. I am willing to charge that enthusiasm has its vices, but they are nothing to the sound virtue it possesses. It's nothing but a love of life, after all,— love following life in its manifestations through the art of poetry."

"I am grateful for your opinion, Jason," I said, "but enthusiasm is a gift of nature, like the quality of a sense,— taste, sight, or touch,— having both its limitations and advantages."

"Well, since nature has not overlooked Miss Burr with her most precious gifts, tell us about them," Psyche generously urged.

"The inappropriate title which Miss Burr gives to her third book of verse," I began, "casts an unjust reflection upon her work in the two volumes that preceded it. I do not mean that the title is inappropriate for the contents; the substance of the poems in this volume is full of life and living, but of both so intensely and exquisitely, that some phrase more symbolic and alluring than the naked words employed, should label the collection. In her two previous volumes this was adequately and alluringly accomplished. One is almost led to ask does this new title imply that the key of experience is struck for the first time, soundly and significantly, in Miss Burr's poetic career? That would be a prodigious mistake. One has only to re-read those two earlier volumes, as I have in the past week, to realize how wrong such a point of view would be. In 'The Roadside Fire,' and 'In Deep Places,' there is an overflowing conviction in such poems as 'The Loser,' 'Battle-Song of Failure,' 'From Far Away,' 'To Her — Unspoken,' 'In the Roman Forum,' 'Jehane,' 'Allah is With the Patient,' 'Petruchio's Wife,' and 'A Lynmouth Widow,'— a spiritual assurance of life's important hold upon the poet's art. But the poet will have the mead of her further experience with life registered, and so what we realize in these new poems is a growth towards the ultimate solutions of human fate, through a sterner perception of realities. I mean that Miss Burr has applied a more cleansing rectitude to her emotions. I mean nothing dubious by that. Her fervent

sympathies with life, grown deeper, has also grown steadier. Her new work is all the more important because she no longer allows impulsiveness to compromise spiritual force. Her impulsiveness is a part of her poetic charm. It is an adorable essence in her art. But the difference she presents is, that it no longer vanishes off into moods that grow vague as a distant echo. The rather full-bodied sound here compels attention. Compels attention sometimes with a shock. And the reader comes to with a surprising conviction that the mood has palpitated with truth. Now the truth may be feverish with regret, as in that astounding bit of illumination called 'The Flirt,' which cannot be too often quoted:

"Beautiful boy, lend me your youth to play with;
My heart is old.
Lend me your fire to make my twilight gay with,
To warm my cold.
Prove that the power my look has not forsaken —
That when I will
My touch can quicken pulses and awaken
Man's passion still.

"The moment that I ask you need not grudge me —
I shall not stay.
I shall be gone, ere you have time to judge me,
My empty way.
I am not worth remembering, little brother,
Even to damn.
One kiss . . . oh, God! if only I were other
Than what I am!

Or it may be of another kind, like the weakness — was it weakness or just the madness of human hunger breaking from the restrictions which the conventions of life imposed? — of the bank clerk in ' Free,' who brought his own triumph to such a sordid and repentant end. I dare say, that it is here where the poet shows her advance: she doesn't flinch from truth, even when it leads her to these veiled and unmentionable retreats of the human spirit.

" And this fearless observation of life," I continued, " is reflected in the collection throughout, even when the theme is nothing like so realistically conceived as in ' The Flirt ' or ' Free.' Take her poem on ' Brother Angelico,' and note the thoroughly human substance she gives that ethereal painter when working on his Madonna. He had drawn her as an abstraction, unsatisfying to the deep human need in himself; but at the last he conceived her as a woman, a mother, giving a miraculous impulse to human nature. She makes him say,

" I began to draw
A woman's face — Saint Lucy's, it may be;
I have forgotten; 'tis no matter now —
But when I came to the complacent mouth
I smeared its shallow beauty swiftly out.
Again I drew, again effaced my work,
And then a sudden madness blazed in me.
I struck my hand against the window-bars
Till the blood came — then with the point red-dipped

I drew again. . . . Oh, I can see it still,
The gracious holiness that smiled on me!
No — not a smile — a wise grave tenderness
More sweet than any smile. My hand went on
As if a spirit held it — drew the throat,
The shoulder's flowing line of loveliness,
The shrine of the deep bosom — surely there
Was an unrecognized memory of the breast
That gave me life, my fair young mother's, dead
When I was still too new to life to guess
What dying meant. How else could I have known?
And there upon that sweet and sacred curve
A little clinging hand — a baby's cheek. . . .
Unveiled, she shone upon my dazzled eyes,
She whom unwitting I had called to sight,
Life, Life incarnate. Make it plain who can
Or let it be as miracles must be,
An awful rapture beyond questioning —
But this I know. I bowed my head, I swayed
Forward, half-fainting, toward the canvas — then . . .
It was not canvas where my cheek found rest.
And sweet — ah, sweeter than the harps of heaven
And holier than all my thoughts of God
I heard her voice.
"'Why hast thou feared me, son?
Why hast thou fled from me, Angelico?
Rest on this bosom that has fed the world
And know that I am good. Lo, I am Life.
To some I seem a terrible goddess, fierce
And cruel — but they do not understand.
'Tis their own hearts that scourge them to their doom.
Unto those who see me as I am,
I am The Mother, and my Son is Love.
To see me as thou seest is to know me.
To understand through love is to possess.

No longer yearn for what thou hast forgone,
My mortal bounty. Thou hast chosen my soul —
Translate that soul unto a waiting world.
Verily, verily, I say to thee
That there are many who have done my work,
Sown my seed and raised my fruit, who wait
For thee, unmated dreamer, to reveal
The meaning of their labor and their love.' "

"What a noble conception, an exalted vision, is in that," interpolated Psyche.

"Now I turn to another poem," I went on after Psyche's praise, "'Ulysses in Ithaca,' in which Miss Burr, with a simplicity so overwhelmingly full that it not only reaches, but strikes beyond perfection, produces a quiveringly human experience. I will quote merely the first stanza, and note particularly the last seven lines:

"Ithaca, Ithaca, the land of my desire!
I'm home again in Ithaca, beside my own hearth-fire.
Sweet patient eyes have welcomed me all tenderness and truth,
Wherein I see kept sacredly the visions of my youth —
Yet sometimes, even as I hear the calm
Deep breathing of Penelope at rest
Beside me — cravingly my empty palm
Curves to the memory of Calypso's breast.
Ah, wild immortal mistress! With a smile
You crowned my passion as a goddess can.
I would not, if I might, regain your isle —
Nor would I lose remembrance, being man.

I think there is a stroke of pure genius in the expression of the seventh and eighth lines. Here is an idea dissociated with reality so poignantly that it makes the sharpness of memory stand out with vividness; it gathers into an embodiment a world of tragic consciousness, and all rooted invisible in the most fiery chronicle of life.

"To focus this mood so superbly, is an achievement of sheer beauty. You know that the poet is initiated into the mysteries of life. The probationary period is over. Where we have been suffused with ardor and fervency, we suddenly realize a strain of spontaneous passion. Where fancy has delighted us, we find the glow of imagination and vision broadening the vistas of the spirit. Let me bring forward," I appealed to my listeners, "as a justification of these statements, two of Miss Burr's poems which sustain — would sustain any poet's — her highest qualities. They are the narrative, 'Mary of Egypt,' and the memorial lines 'The Poppies.' The first tells the story of the Alexandrian Mary who, trying to seduce Christ, was redeemed from harlotry through the Galilean's mystical influence. The gradual steps by which she attained to spiritual salvation is what renders the poem most significant. The most poignant part of the narrative are those stanzas which tell how Mary paid her passage from Alexandria to Palestine. The cunning subtlety of Arthur Symons could not have devised it more pathetically:

"Mary of Egypt walked by the sea;
Her lids were heavy with tears and wine,
And she saw a ship that rocked at the quay
Spreading the sail for the far blue brine.
The Captain smiled when he saw her there,
And blew a kiss to the harlot fair.
'Where are you bound, sir Captain — where?'
'To the land of Palestine.'

"Mary of Egypt leapt from the shore
As the ship cast off her ropes from the land.
The captain paled and the captain swore,
But he held her safe by the small soft hand.
'Girl, are you sick of life,' he cried,
'To spring to peril as groom to bride?'
'Die I must unless I ride
To the port where your course is planned!'

"'How will you pay your passage-fee?'
'Silver and gold I left behind —
Will you not take me for charity?'
'Charity's cold — I have in mind
A pleasanter coin for you to pay.'
Loathing she shrank from his touch away,
But if she would go she must needs obey
And give him his will when he said, 'Be kind!'

"So at length to her goal she came —
Weary and long was the way for her!
Sick and haggard with grief and shame,
Driven by hope with a scarlet spur.
Pilgrims passing, she followed them
Up to the city Jerusalem,
Where shone like the pearl of a diadem
The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The final triumph of the woman over her past life is deeply touching. Her soul purged, she 'beheld her Lord, becoming for all future time the symbol of sin, pity, and forgiveness.

"If all the inner elements of Miss Burr's art have strengthened," I finished, "as these quotations, in my opinion show, so has the expression gained a firmer texture, a phrasing more substantial. Her fault has, perhaps, been a musical excess; a tendency sometimes to spin rhyme and rhythm on a frail stick of substance. She was capable, when the mood had exhausted itself, of bringing up its shadow. The result was often delightful, in the sense of dexterously turning a neat cadence, which finally echoed off into sentiment. Her best poems in previous collections showed, however, that this was purely a fault, as a fault may be of one kind or another with true poets. Those faults are not to be insisted upon as representative. What is representative, are those qualities which compel us to accept the lesser good with the greater. Miss Burr's place is high among contemporary poets. She commands a technique of admirable simplicity; she has an instinctive ear for music. Her power for visualization is of a high order. She sings in the truest sense; being a suggester and interpreter of life and experience."

When we reached the edge of the woods on our way back to The Farm, Jason remarked: "Miss Burr's poem makes a very good commentary on the

text of the mysteries that move us in this adventure called life."

"Yes," Psyche added, "dream within substance, reality in the shadow."

XIII

ROMANTICS: HALF MOROCCO 8 vo

Crossing the field in front of the house on the way to the woods I was walking a little ahead of my companions thinking of the change that had come over the earth as the days slipped out of summer's lap into the arms of autumn. The scenes around me I had learned to love for their warm, intimate quality, a characteristic of the New Hampshire landscape. It was a still, quiet country of broad-acred farms and woods, with few main roads, the principal one zigzagging its distance of eighteen miles from Nashua to Manchester. This main artery of travel between the two cities lay on the eastern side of the Merrimac River, and almost continuously for ten or twelve miles the woods ran parallel to it, sometimes but a few yards away, and at its furthest not more than half a mile. The Farm was at this furthest point, the highway running through it, with the house setting a few feet back on its western side. The mellow sunlight of the September afternoon flooded the scene, and though every object near us lay or stood unconcealed, there was a retiring mood in nature which had put me in a deferential attitude towards the landscape. We went through

the stile and out upon the car tracks, following them for a short distance, when we turned into the Derry Road. For the first time, I noticed that the screen of leaves along the border of the woods was not so effective in shutting out the view that lay behind. The pruning hand of nature was already at work, and those hardwood maples and oaks, trees which lose their leaves earliest, were opening vistas through the branches. On the ground the crimson and yellow leaves lay like a patchwork. Except for the aster and golden-rod, the flowers were gone from the roadside. The scene gave me the first faint impression of melancholy which deepens, day by day, as the autumnal season waxes. We said nothing as we walked, and that was significant: something in us needed adjusting to the spirit surrounding us, and until the accomplishment, silence was the guardian of our friendly advance. By the time we reached the grove there was a feeling of security in nature's good will, for the place had never seemed to welcome our presence with such a gracious expression. That impression of melancholy I had felt at the edge of the woods had not entered this spot. It was friendlier than ever during the midsummer days. Quieter because most of the birds had departed; this did not leave the place desolated, or give it an air of forsaken loneliness. Instead it had the feeling of a room when all but a few of the large company of guests had gone, and the hostess, with the remaining intimates, lingered over the tea-cups in cosy friend-

ship and easy flowing conversation. We felt this hospitality in the atmosphere around our immense pine. And we were very happy and contented with it.

"Well, is no one going to begin?" Cassandra broke the spell which seemed to hold us captured to silence.

"Suppose we let Jason do that," I suggested.

"Yes," approved Psyche. "I think it is Jason's turn to give us a lecture, and as he is a great admirer of Ruth Comfort Mitchell, I think he might have exclusive rights to her volume."

"I never lectured in my life," protested Jason.

"But you talk a great deal, and it nearly amounts to the same thing," Psyche replied.

"Oh, thank you, for telling me of my worst vice," he sarcastically returned.

"It only becomes a vice when you are sarcastic and cynical," Psyche told him.

"Come," I said, "we want to hear what you've got to say for 'The Night Court and Other Verse.'"

"Suppose I surprise you and become very earnest about this poet? You know I believe she has a distinctly fresh vision, and an entirely individual way of expressing herself," he said.

"We would desire nothing better from you, Jason, than earnestness," Psyche replied.

Jason took no notice of the remark. With a funny gesture he leaned forward and began to talk. "We must not be misled by the claims put forward for Miss Mitchell's art, that its chief sig-

nificance is by way of being 'informed throughout by the spirit of communal sympathy and social purpose.' Again, we must not, I think, qualify the eager purpose that seeks to capitalize the titular poem, 'The Night Court,' on the popularity which attended a social document, 'The Man with the Hoe,' and set the fashion for sentimentalizing oppression and injustice, nearly twenty years ago. We may go to any extent that is desirable, in sympathizing with the spirit of 'communal sympathy and social purpose'; but we have a right to stand rigidly against the sentimentality which has become even more of an artifice, than sentimentality in love, with contemporary poets. The true poet of social injustice must rise from the bitter experience of that injustice; the spirit, rather than the embodiment, of that experience must be seared with passion; the passion which forges its form from the molten iron of suffering. The difference is the difference between the social chants of Ebenezer Elliot and William Morris; between the poems of Arturo Giovannitti and Morris Rosenfeld, and all the spiritually and physically comfortable and habited poets of today, who look upon the reverse side of social conditions.

"I deny Miss Mitchell nothing of her sincere effort in 'The Night Court.' Yet how much more does she do than poetize the old, old sermon, 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone'? Morally we should attach the greatest importance to the sermon, but art takes another account,

which demands that the sermon be not obstrusive. And it is not obtrusive merely because it is believed in, but because that belief becomes a statement rather than a gesture of faith, a flourish of conviction. Take the conclusion of Miss Mitchell's poem and see how the sermonizing element enters:

"Let's call the code —
That facile thing they've fashioned to their mode;
Smug sophistries that smother and befool,
That numb and stupify; that clumsy thing
That measures mountains with a three-foot rule,
And plumbs the ocean with a pudding string —
The little, brittle code. Here is the root,
Far out of sight and buried safe and deep,
And Rose Costara is the bitter fruit,
On every limb and leaf, death, ruin, creep.

So, lady novelist, go home again.
Rub biting acid on your little pen.
Look back and out and up and in, and then
Write that it is no job for pruning-shears.
Tell them to dig for years and years and years
The twined and twisted roots. Blot out the page;
Invert the blundering order of the age;
Reverse the scheme: the last shall be the first.
Summon the system, starting with the worst —
The lying, dying code! On, down the line,
The city and the court, the cop. Assign
The guilt, the blame, the shame! Sting, lash, and spur!
Call each and all! Call us! And *then* call her!

He would, indeed, be a fool who would deny the

truth of this indictment; but he also would be a little unsound in his judgment who could claim that it transcended more than a vivid craftsmanship, exposing a figure which society has produced, and for which it takes no moral responsibility.

"Now, as a matter of fact," continued Jason, "and in spite of the effort to present Miss Mitchell's quality as a poet, on the social temper of 'The Night Court,' she has a real and impressive power of imagination which is of a very different significance and value. Her highest poetic quality is a little difficult to describe, because it is at once both literal and symbolic. There is no one among our poets with quite her power of compressing the abstract and expanding the concrete within the same emotional furnace. I noticed this in the very first poems I ever read of Miss Mitchell's. The poem I have chiefly in mind which does this, is 'The Sin Eater,' still one of the best poems she has written. With my first reading I regarded it as the work of a woman who showed unmistakable signs of genius, and who had it in her to go far in the art of poetry. Her later poems have proved my faith. But this poem struck a rich, vivid, original note, which was of one absolutely whole and complete pattern of imaginative awe. It left me a little breathless, I'll admit, tacking down its *obvious* symbolism — I say obvious, because it was like tracing the course of a light upon a dark landscape, every feature of

which is familiar but elusive in obscurity. The art of the poem is so sure, every word evocative of an atmosphere which brought a strange chill of fascination to the feelings. The weird spell begins to work with the very first words:

I

"Hark ye! Hush ye! Margot's dead!
Hush! Ha' done wi' your brawling tune!
Danced, she did, till the stars grew pale;
Mother o' God, an' she's gone at noon!
Sh-h . . . d'ye *hear* me? — Margot's *dead!*
Sickened an' drooped an' died in an hour.
(Bring me th' milk an' th' meat an' bread!)
Drooped, she did, like a wilted flower.
Come an' look at her, how she lies,
Little an' lone an' like she's scared. . . .
(She lost her beads last Friday week,
Tore her book, an' she never cared.)
Eh, my lass, but it's winter, now,—
You that ever was meant for June,—
Your laughing mouth and your dancing feet —
An' now you're done, like an ended tune.
Where's that woman? Ah, give it me quick;
Food at her head and her poor, still feet. . . .
There's plenty, fool! D'ye think th' wench
Has *so* many sins for Himself to eat?
Take up your cloak an' hand me mine.
Are we fetching him? Eh, for sure,
An' you'll come with me for all your quakes,
Clear to his cave across th' moor!
— Margot, dearie, don't look so scared!
It's no long while till your peace begins.
What if you tore your book, poor lamb?
I'm bringing you one will eat your sins!

II

" It's a blood red sun that's sinking . . .
Ohooo . . . but th' marshland's drear!
Woman, for why will you be shrinking?
I'm telling you there's nought to fear.
What if the twilight's gloomish
An' th' shadows creep an' crawl? —
Woman, woman, here'll be th' cave —
Stand by me close till I call!
'Sin Eater! Devil Cheater!'
(Eh, it echoes hollowly!)
'Margot's dead at Willow Farm!
Shroud your face and follow me!'

III

" One o' th' clock . . . two o' th' clock . . .
This night's a week in span.
Still he crouches by her side,
Devil . . . ghost . . . or man?

IV

" Woman, never cock's crow sounded sweet before!
Set th' casement wide ajar, fasten back th' door!
(Eh, but I be cold an' stiff, waiting for th' dawn!)
Fetch me flowers — jessamine — *See, th' food is gone!*
Light enough to see her now . . . *Mary!* How her face
Shines on us like altar fires, now she's sure o' grace!
Never mind your book, my lamb, never heed your beads!
There's th' Gleam before you now,— follow where it leads!

V

"Tearful peace and gentle grief
Brood on Willow Farm:
Margot, sleeping in her flowers,
Smiles, secure from harm;
In a cave across the moor,
Dank and dark within,
Moans the trafficker in souls,
Freshly bowed with sin.

"There is a deep poet speaking in that poem; and she speaks variously with that same imaginative strangeness in several other poems. Listen to her in 'The Vinegar Man,' and the voice goes deeply into your recollection of tragedies that grow out of incidents apparently as trifling as the torn valentine of this poem; and there is the same voice in 'The Orient, Half Morocco, 8 vo.,' a pathetic picture of a woman in dream-reality living the life of the Orient upon her farm, because,

"She bought a book, once, with the butter money —
A wild, undreamed of, reckless thing to do!
(So much to manage for the winter schooling;
That split in Hannah Mary's Sunday shoe. . . .)

"The cover bravely flaunted gold and scarlet,—
Gave hint and promise of the hidden feast,
Fine-grained and limber, sleek beneath the fingers,
Frankly symbolic of the gorgeous east.

"She wrapt it up and laid it in the bureau;
She knew she wouldn't get to read it soon,—
Not while she had the harvesters to cook for,
Tho' maybe . . . of a Sunday afternoon. . . .

" How often, then, her thought went winging to it,
Thro' all the cumbered days she had to wait,
Till, in a scanty hour of hard-won leisure,
She entered shyly thro' the latticed gate:

" Dim har'ms . . . *sultans* . . . *yashmaks* . . . cloudy
nargillehs,—
Strange sounding words from far-off story lands;
The farm-house fades; the Wishing Carpet bears her
To Kairowan, across the golden sands.

" Since then, thro' all the somber woof of living,
For her the mystic Orient weaves its spells;
Faintly, at dawn, down thro' the dairy pasture,
She seems to hear the chime of temple bells.

" Now she can see across the piles of mending —
(There is a window in her prison tower!)
Beyond the baking and the baby tending
The Mueddin calls across the sunset hour.

" When the fierce August sun in grudging mercy,
Threatening worse torments for the morrow, sets,
The battered barns, the tanks, the gilded hay cocks,
Are distant domes and towers and minarets.

" The sullen farmer, summoned in to supper,
Weary and silent as he slouches down,
To her fresh eyes becomes a mighty Caliph
Whose minions tremble at his slightest frown.

" Subtlest of all — of course they do not mark it —
She in herself is gently touched with grace —
The swifter carriage of her toil-warped figure,
The ghost of girlhood in her furrowed face.

"Sometimes they have to call her twice, and sharply;
(They see her, and they think that she is there!)
Thro' all the homely clamor, she is hearing
Oh, very near and clear, The Call to Prayer!

"And so this voice with its curiously mixed keys of fact and symbolism, sounds in 'The Old Maid,' touching beyond description with its double moods of fading hope and burning expectation; and in 'St. John of Nepomuc,' really a masterpiece of an embodiment of modernity, telling the story of the medieval saint by a young college freshman in Prague, who moralizes upon his influence when he makes a touchdown:

"And there I was on that old bridge . . . boob
Freshman me on that same bridge!
The lazy river hummed and purred and sang a sleepy song . . .
Of course, I know it listens queer, but gad, it was so real and near,
I stood there basking in the sun for goodness knows how long.

"Sometimes I see it even now: I see that little lean old saint
Put up against the shining spears his simple nerve and pluck:
And once, by Jove, you know, he came right down beside me in the game . . .
We know who made the touchdown then, old John of Nepomuc!

"Any subject may be attempted in verse, but not every poet can make any subject yield its

poetry to the imagination. Miss Mitchell has this faculty as John Masefield has it. She can take as he takes, any unpromising material and get out of it the essence of beauty and the element of mystery. I ought to say, however, it is only when she gives herself freely to the inspiration, and does not permit extraneous purposes to lead her astray. Her football poem ' Revelation,' in which she tells of a lad making the team, though he did not get into the game, has a subtler signification than the mere theme implies:

" *He had not made the team, but for four long seasons,*
Each of ten grinding weeks, he had given the flower,
The essence, and strength of body, brain, and spirit,
He and his kind — the second team — till the power
To cope with opposition and to surmount it
Into the team was driven against this hour!

" What did it matter who held onto the leather,
He or another? What was a four-years' dream?
Out of his heart the shame and rancor lifted;
There burst from his throat a hoarse, exultant scream.
Not in the fight, but part of it, he was winning!
This was his victory: he had *made* the team!

The poet speaks in this poem in glowing tones of imagination and vision.

" How absent these poetic qualities are from a modern subject, we have only to turn to Miss Mitchell's poem on ' The Subway.' The reason is evident. Here we are again in that atmosphere which seems to accuse our social disorder. All

the elements of that disorder are catalogued to no purpose; for if rapid transit imposes upon the citizen the discomforts of crowds, bad ventilation, and numerous other ills — including the propinquity of humanity — its boon as a part of the march of modern progress quite makes up in general for the superficial defects: and this leaves the particular treatment of subject as a social theme, nowhere. Where Miss Mitchell fails in a subject of this kind is scarcely in her art, but must be laid to the fault of her conception of its purpose. It is a serious, but not a damaging, error. She redeems herself too often, for it to damage her gifts. For a first book," Jason concluded, " this collection is an excellent accomplishment. There is a maturity of touch that seems incredible for so young a poet. Apart from the art which she so adroitly commands is the substance of her work, which is streaked with so many gleams of a strong visual imagination.

" I ought to have made a condition when I consented to discuss Miss Mitchell's book, and that was, that you would promise to give us your opinion of Miss Lowell's 'Men, Women and Ghosts,'" Jason addressed me. " I don't think Psyche or Cassandra would mind."

The girls both said they would be delighted. They had their own opinions about Miss Lowell's art, but as they were in a receptive mood to-day on account of the persuasive eloquence of the grove, they were ready to be convinced on any doubtful points of theory or purpose. " Of

course," remarked Cassandra, "I am quite aware of the confusion of opinion about Miss Lowell's art; she assails traditions, but I can see nothing extraordinary about that — poets have done that before, and will continue to do so long after this generation is dead. And it isn't so much the manner of that assault either, that interests me, but the quality of individual power, of instinctive poetic temperament, she has. Only the results, not the method, can show these; and those results must be judged by a standard which is not whimsical, as some think, but eternal."

"You are right in your point of view, Cassandra," I said. "When I began reading 'Men, Women and Ghosts,' I could not help recognizing the truth of these reflections by a modern critic. 'The principle of destruction,' wrote Arthur Symons, 'is the principle of life. It is your business if you are bringing a new force into the world, to begin by killing, or at least wounding, a tradition, even if the tradition once had all the virtues.' And 'true originality,' he continues, 'will but disconcert the student of poetry who has come to love certain formulas, the formulas of his masters, which seem to him, as every form of truth must seem to "young ignorance and old custom," a form immortal in itself.' Miss Lowell has been wounding tradition ever since the publication of 'Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds,' two years ago; and 'young ignorance and old custom' have been disconcerted in championing the old formulas. It has been, this spectacle of passionate protection

against originality, very largely on the surface, a voluntary confession that form is immortal only when it is barricaded with limitations. But the point is missed, by every student of poetry who shows himself disconcerted by new formulas, that a 'limitation, which in the artist is often strength, shutting him in more securely on his own path, in the critic is mere weakness of sight, an unpardonable blindness. In no two ages of the world has eternal beauty manifested itself under the same form.'

"I open myself to the charge of inconsistency when I agree that the 'poetry that is at once recognized by its resemblance to other poetry must always be second-rate work,' but I have not been inconsistent because what I have recognized is that a degree of intensity and a mode of spiritual intuition is often comparable in poets far apart in the effect of their total achievement. Judged by this, the poems in Miss Lowell's new volume are not second-rate work, because they have no resemblance to any other poetry. One may look around and examine all the other poetry in English that has lately, with new formulas, departed from the traditional modes of expression, and find nothing exactly like the art in 'Men, Women and Ghosts.' There are Miss Lowell's confrères in 'Imagism,' but even among them there is no such advance, as she has made, in taking the principle of form out of a narrow practice and setting it constructively upon the fundamental base of rhythmic laws. Let us glance for a moment at her own declara-

tion of principle. 'It has long been a favorite idea of mine,' she writes, 'that the rhythms of *vers libre* have not been sufficiently plumbed, that there is in them a power of variation which has never yet been brought to the light of experiment. I think it was the piano pieces of Débussy, with their strange likeness to short *vers libre* poems, which first showed me the close kinship of music and poetry, and there flashed into my mind the idea of using the movement of poetry in somewhat the same way that the musician uses the movement of music. It was quite evident that this could never be done in the strict pattern of a metrical form, but the flowing, fluctuating rhythm of *vers libre* seemed to open the door to such an experiment.'

"The 'power of variation' that has been attempted in the present collection offers results which carry the art of 'Men, Women and Ghosts' beyond experimentation. 'This is a book of stories,' the poet declares. 'For that reason I have excluded all purely lyrical poems. But the word "stories" has been stretched to its fullest application. It includes both narrative poems, properly so-called; tales divided into scenes, and a few pieces of less obvious story-telling import in which one might say that the *dramatis personæ* are air, clouds, trees, houses, streets, and such things.' These stories, however, are not only told in the 'fluctuating rhythm of *vers libre*,' in which the movement of poetry is associated with the movement of music, but in the ordered pattern of

Chaucerian stanzas, and in strict metrical forms; sometimes the two forms blending, as in the narrative of 'The Cremona Violin'; and also in polyphonic prose, a form of Miss Lowell's own invention, in which the typographical arrangement of the words gives elaborate and effective aid to the dramatic substance, and have recurrent pulse and rhyme.

"There are five groups of poems in the volume, and the caption of each is an ornament in itself. 'Figurines in Old Saxe' contains the incomparable 'Patterns,' opening the book; 'Pickthorn Manor,' a long narrative in metre and rhyme, of the eighteenth century, in which love produces hallucination of identity, ending through discovery upon a final note of tragedy; 'The Cremona Violin,' another long narrative with a Germanic setting in the eighteenth century; 'The Cross-Roads,' a ghostly tale of New England; 'A Roxbury Garden,' a delightful chronicle of two girls and their games; and '1777,' a poem of two contrasting parts, the first dealing with our own Revolutionary atmosphere and the second a series of Venetian pictures, both parts depending for their dramatization upon natural objects. Next come 'Bronze Tablets,' four poems of the Napoleonic era, containing the 'Fruit Shop,' 'Malmaison,' 'The Hammers,' and 'The Two Travellers in the Place Vendôme'— these are veritable achievements of historical narratives with something of an epical significance condensed in the human characterization of the figure of Na-

poleon woven with the destinies of his career into a great drama. 'War Pictures' contains the well-known 'The Bombardment,' and a still more remarkable poem called 'The Allies,' which is quite worthy of a place beside Masefield's 'August: 1914'; 'The Overgrown Pasture' is a series of poems in Yankee dialect; and finally 'Clock Ticks of a Century,' with a supplementary section of 'Towns in Color,' in which the attempt is to give the 'color, and light, and shade of certain places and hours, stressing the purely pictorial effect.'

"Here is a bewilderment of riches; an ornate, massive, richly-furnished palace of art. Don't expect to find a comfortable love-in-a-cottage, nor even one of those plain and serviceable, utilitarian structures through which flow the mundane, practical affairs of man, in this book. You will be disappointed if you do; moreover, you will be shocked and dazzled, by a splendor which, because of your untravelled mind in the far and remote chronicle of literary history, will not be a splendor at all. Not many Americans who look upon the Parthenon or the Roman Forum, have that agreeable feeling of antique beauty of form, or are possessed by that influence which flows from associations mellow with age; a modern skyscraper in lower Manhattan means much more to them, they can see and grasp the purpose for which it exists, but the Roman Forum! your practical and blunted tourist would have those ruins demolished and construct on the site something that would pay.

'Drain the ground, and make the place sanitary, and the income from leases for public shows — including Billy Sunday — will make the place pay,' he thinks, with a mind oblivious to history and ears deaf to the voice of a great race speaking in the stately silence, and his eyes blind to the beauty of form which still keeps alive the spirit of culture which was at the height of its perfection two thousand years ago.

"Yes," I almost brooded, "this is an art you must take on its own terms, just as any romanticist must be taken on his own terms. You can only say what it does in so far as you are able to see and understand what it is trying to do. You cannot approach it with any preconceived notions of what it ought to be; you can only approach it with a desire to be moved, to receive pleasure, to have your own dormant emotions made articulate, through imagery, color, sound, and symbols, or through any combination of these that will produce the ecstasy of realization; that is your only standard of judgment. But do not believe that all the responsibility, even if most of the labor, belongs to the poet. Upon you is the obligation to be at least intelligent, to be aware of the wide, divergent, and multiform aspects of life; and as these are almost limitless, so is the expression in art, borrowing from all sources its material of reproduction and presentation, to record the countless facets of the world.

"Now your romanticist proceeds as if there had never been such a sense as wonder in the world

before his own personal experience with it. Yet wonder is not the end but the means of his daring imaginative exploration of dreams. Wonder is ruthless because it will not be guided by tradition, but goes its own way, bent on its own purpose — and finds its own goal wherever it lies in the hinterland of consciousness. The petty question whether such a mood produces poetry, settles itself in time; as it settled itself for Blake, and for Keats and Shelley.

"Miss Lowell is a romanticist. She has the two important requisites which make a romantic poet: a daring imagination, and the emotional energy to sustain it. 'Pickthorn Manor' is an admirable illustration of both forces at work with even pace; in 'The Cremona Violin' one lags a little behind the other, to consequent defects in the poem. But in the Napoleonic poems they work with magnificent harmony, sweeping across the horizon of history on glittering wings of human destiny. 'Malmaison' is a huge canvas, but 'The Hammers' has the breadth and depth of an epical imagination. More, it has profound feeling. The tapping of hammers is made a symbol of the destiny of Napoleon. First at Kent, in 1786, with the building of the 'Bellerophon'; next in Paris, March, 1814, in removing the imperial eagle and bees from a perfumer's shop; again in Paris, April, 1814, when the inscriptions of the imperial victories are chiselled off the marble arch in the Place du Carrousel; at Croisy, Ile-de-France, June, 1815,

where a blacksmith is shoeing a horse for a sergeant of Napoleon's after Waterloo; and lastly, the hammering of the coffin for the Man of Destiny, at St. Helena, May, 1821. There is the stuff of great art in this, and the poet has made the most of it. It is too long for me to read now, but I want to read the poem which closes this Napoleonic sequence, the 'Two Travellers in the Place Vendôme,' because I believe it will give you a sense of the bigness of the theme and its treatment by the poet. The colloquy takes place in the reign of Louis Philippe:

"A great tall column spearing at the sky
With a little man on top. Goodness! Tell me why?
He looks a silly thing enough to stand up there so high.

"What a strange fellow, like a soldier in a play,
Tight-fitting coat with the tails cut away,
High-crowned hat which the brims overlay.

"Two-horned hat makes an outline like a bow.
Must have a sword, I can see the light glow
Between a dark line and his leg. Vertigo.

"I get gazing up at him, a pygmy flashed with sun.
A weathercock or scarecrow or both things in one?
As bright as a jewelled crown hung above a throne.

"Say, what is the use of him if he doesn't turn?
Just put up to glitter there, like a torch to burn,
A sort of sacrificial show in a lofty urn?

"But why a little soldier in an obsolete dress?
I'd rather see a Goddess with a spear, I confess.
Something allegorical and fine. Why, yes —

"I cannot take my eyes from him. I don't know why
at all.
I've looked so long the whole thing swims. I feel
he ought to fall.
Foreshortened there among the clouds he's pitifully
small.

"What do you say? There used to be an Emperor
standing there,
With flowing robes and laurel crown. Really?
Yet I declare
Those spiral battles round the shaft don't seem just
his affair.

"A togaed, laurelled man's, I mean. Now this chap
seems to feel
As though he owned those soldiers. Whew! How
he makes one reel,
Swinging round above his circling armies in a wheel.

"Swinging round the sky in an orbit like the sun's,
Flashing sparks like cannon-balls from his own long
guns.
Perhaps my sight is tired, but that figure simply
stuns.

"How low the houses seem, and all the people are
mere flies.
That fellow pokes his hat up till it scratches on the
skies.
Impudent! Audacious! But, by Jove, he blinds
the eyes!"

"It isn't fair to break in," remarked Psyche when I finished the poem, "but won't you read the last section of 'St. Helena, May, 1821,' which closes 'The Hammers'? My reading gave me an impression of the splendor and sweep of the imagination matching the terrific drama of a colossal human failure, in those lines."

"Yes; Psyche, I will read them," I replied. "There *is* a tremendous vision in those lines of the emptiness of greatness, of the last refuge for haunted dreams, in the silence and defeat of death." And I read:

"Tap! Tap! Tap!
Marble likeness of an Emperor,
Dead man, who burst your heart against a world
too narrow,
The hammers drum you to your last throne
Which always you shall hold alone.
Tap! Tap!
The glory of your past is faded as a sunset fire,
Your day lingers only like the tones of a wind-lyre
In a twilit room.
Here is the emptiness of your dream
Scattered about you.
Coins of yesterday,
Double Napoleons stamped with Consul or Emperor,
Strange as those of Herculaneum —
And you just dead!
Not one spool of thread
Will these buy in any market-place.
Lay them over him,
They are the baubles of a crown of mist
Worn in a vision and melted away at waking.

Tap! Tap!
His heart strained at kingdoms
And now it is content with a silver dish.
Strange World! Strange Wayfarer!
Strange Destiny!
Lower it gently beside him and let it lie.
Tap! Tap! Tap!"

I paused after the last line. Even Jason, whom I felt to be a little skeptical about the merits of Miss Lowell's verse, visibly caught at his breath while listening. "Half Morocco, 8 vo,— what difference does the binding make!" he murmured.

I wondered if he meant to be ironic, but there was too serious a look in his face. "It doesn't make any difference — in the text, if it is sound and true," I said. "Miss Lowell and Miss Mitchell are romanticists, and so form itself must be a thing of ingenious device to be in harmony with the substance."

"But the romantic impulse leads to excess, doesn't it?" asked Psyche.

"Excess in art is better than poverty. But don't think that I mean the restraint of the classical mood is either poverty of ideas or imagination. The excess of romanticism is in curiosity and experiment. The former leads very often to mere inquisitiveness instead of sympathy, and the latter to absurd expressions. The senses of sound and sight are the most important in the creation of poetry. Feeling, of course, is the fundamental quality in human expression through the forms of art. But sound and sight come to the surface

with the greatest sensuous intensity. Now I think it is a danger in Miss Lowell's art to have too sensuous a sense of sight, as Swinburne had too sensuous a sense of sound. Meaning in either, is likely to have no significance. Miss Lowell in striving for the pictorial effect has established what she calls the 'unrelated' method. I would like to quote her on this theory: 'One last innovation I have still to mention. It will be found in "Spring Day," and more fully enlarged upon in the series "Towns in Colour." In these poems, I have endeavoured to give the colour, and light, and shade, of certain places and hours, stressing the purely pictorial effect, and with little or no reference to any other aspect of the places described. It is an enchanting thing to wander through a city looking for its unrelated beauty, the beauty by which it captivates the sensuous sense of seeing. I have always loved aquariums, but for years I went to them and looked, and looked, at those swirling, shooting, looping patterns of fish, which always defied transcription to paper until I hit upon the "unrelated" method. The result is in "An Aquarium."' A great many people," I added, "cannot accept this theory, or method, because it is 'unrelated' to some human emotion or purpose. The thing can't, for them, be just what it is in itself; that motion and color can't create its own beauty as a natural object, without some indwelling sense which depends for its significance upon human feeling."

"But how about the object, or objects, react-

ing upon human emotions?" asked Jason. "Objects exist for no other purpose than to arouse the sensuous delight of seeing."

"Seeing a picture, I should say, that has a certain quality of beauty. But let me read the poem," I said, "for what it suggests.

"Streaks of green and yellow iridescence,
Silver shiftings,
Rings veering out of rings,
Silver — gold —
Grey-green opaqueness sliding down,
With sharp white bubbles
Shooting and dancing,
Flinging quickly outward.
Nosing the bubbles,
Swallowing them,
Fish.
Blue shadows against silver-saffron water,
The light rippling over them
In steel-bright tremors.
Outspread translucent fins
Flute, fold, and relapse;
The threaded light prints through them on the pebbles
In scarcely tarnished twinklings.
Curving of spotted spines,
Slow up-shifts,
Lazy convolutions:
Then a sudden swift straightening
And darting below:
Oblique grey shadows
Athwart a pale casement.
Roped and curled,
Green man-eating eels

Slumber in undulate rhythms,
With crests laid horizontal on their backs.
Barred fish,
Stripped fish,
Uneven disks of fish,
Slip, slide, whirl, turn,
And never touch.
Metallic blue fish,
With fins wide and yellow and swaying
Like Oriental fans,
Hold the sun in their bellies
And glow with light:
Blue brilliance cut by black bars.
An oblong pane of straw-coloured shimmer,
Across it, in a tangent,
A smear of rose, black, silver.
Short twists and upstartings,
Rose-black, in a setting of bubbles:
Sunshine playing between red and black flowers
On a blue and gold lawn.
Shadows and polished surfaces,
Facets of mauve and purple,
A constant modulation of values.
Shaft-shaped,
With green bead eyes;
Thick-nosed,
Heliotrope-coloured;
Swift spots of chrysolite and coral;
In the midst of green, pearl, amethyst irradiations.

" Outside,
A willow-tree flickers
With little white jerks,
And long blue waves
Rise steadily beyond the outer islands.

"Clearly and definitely the verse-stories in 'Men, Women and Ghosts,'" I said in conclusion, "place Miss Lowell among the contemporary poets who have arrived. Now that her art, as art built upon the elements of revolt against tradition, has amply and fully functioned to a degree where it can no longer be assailed for either inadequacy or wilfulness, her substance alone offers a matter for controversy. But after all, substance is the point of vital discussion in all poets. She, wisely, taking a last stand on the question of form, remarks, 'For the substance of the poems — why, the poems are here.' Yes, they are here, with an astonishing amount of emotional and visionary power. It is seldom to be discerned through any test of the subjective sentiment; she knows experience as something spun like fine sunshine thrown over life, and from which she evokes an objective pattern more universal than particular. The book is a reading of life, dramatic, vivid, effective, in which delicate and tender moods are as expressive as those more vigorous strokes in which the qualities of romantic terror and naturalism abound."

"Eureka!" cried Jason as he leaped to his feet, "the bastion of conservatism utterly demolished." We got up and followed him out of the woods.

"Yes," I said, "whether you like the art or not you've got to respect it."

Psyche and Cassandra were silent as we walked along; but there was an air of approval about them.

XIV

THE DREAM ON ITS THRONE

The September weather continued perfect, and our next gathering was full of the same tranquil influence abiding in the woods that had touched us on the last meeting. The shadows came down earlier, of course, in the afternoon, and there was apt to be a fall of temperature accompanying them, with a sharp breeze in it. So we did not stay as late, but made up for the shortening day by going to the woods an hour earlier. Nature was now well into the appearance of the new season. Though there was a change from the habit of greenery and all its substances of growth, — with which we have been familiar in companionship through certain days in the summer,— to a habit of brilliant colors without quickening sap, the eye had not lost its appetite for a sensuous picture of the woods. Behind the visible world, however it had changed in the dress of grass, trees and flowers, the dream was still on its throne. When that was lost, then all hope would be gone.

We were to consider war again in the poetry for discussion. Psyche still shrank a little from the prospect, when we chose the books. "But the message in our present group," I said, "has an

inspiring note. The other day I ran across the clipping of a poem by Herbert Trench, cut from an English paper. It is one of the loveliest poems I have read about the war, because of its confident, exalted faith in the nobility of the soul of man to rise above the passions and hatreds, the brutality and crimes of the present war." And I took from my pocket-book the clipping and read "The Birds Flit Unafraid":

> "The birds flit unafraid
> Through your great cannonade;
> And, O Cannoniers, though ill
> The forests take your skill
> And as by winter nipp'd
> Scatter leaves bullet-stript
> Down the shell-ravaged road —
> Still, in its dark abode,
> In the branches of God,
> The Soul sings on alone;
> You may blow the dead from their cript,
> Not the dream from its throne!"

"'The dream from its throne!' repeated Psyche. "If it is true! If it is true! Can the world accept the noble assurance of those lines in the midst of this holocaust of strife and passion?"

"The highest function of poetry in relation to this war — and through it to the age — is to keep alive in man his faith that the dream *is* on its throne. That dream is the message that the angel brought to the shepherds on the morning of Christ's nativity. For two thousand years al-

most, the world has failed in living up to it. In a moment of arrogant, drunken pride of strength and ambition, it was cut by the cruel thrust of the sword from the lexicon of monarchy. But it was only the letter of the text that was seared from the book of humanity by that thrust; the spirit was in the hearts of men who believe in justice and democracy, and they went forth to the trenches, and on to the high seas, to defend it. The attempt to demolish the spiritual fabric of that great dream was, in the opinion of a friend of mine, the devil's last hope of overcoming God. This friend believed that the German Kaiser was the devil incarnate; and that he was using the German people to enthrall the world. His principalities and powers were a terrific and invincible armament, which he flaunted before the soul of mankind, saying: 'Bow down and worship me and all these shall ye have.' But the world said, as Christ said to the same evil spirit on the high mount two thousand years ago, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' It is saying it with the British navy, with the heroic national spirit of France, with the inexhaustible resources of food and money in pro-Ally America. . . . No, the dream which is still that angelic message, and the throne which is the structure of the Christian religion upon which it sets, have not perished. Against the shock of the Teutonic blasphemy it has stood secure in the spirit of mankind."

"That shock is dashing itself to pieces, like a wave against a rock, on the immovable spiritual

force of democracy," Jason echoed my thought. "I too, ran across a fugitive poem recently, which shows how solemnly and exultantly man has consecrated himself sacrificially to the cause. The poem was written by the Earl of Crewe in memory of his son-in-law, the Hon. A. E. B. O'Neill, M. P., fallen in battle. Here is the poem," said Jason, reading:

"Here in the marshland, past the battered bridge,
One of a hundred grains untimely sown,
Here with his comrades of the hard-won ridge
He rests, unknown.

"His horoscope had seemed so plainly drawn;
School triumphs earned apace in work and play;
Friendship at will; then love's delightful dawn
And mellowing day.

"Home fostering hope; some service to the state;
Benignant age; then the long tryst to keep
Where in the yew-tree shadows congregate
His fathers sleep.

"Was here the one thing needful to distil
From life's alembic, through this holier fate,
The man's essential soul, the hero will?
We ask; and wait."

"Yes; it is beautiful," said Cassandra; "but it is man speaking for man. There is another voice, a voice for the first time piercingly raised, compelling the world to heed — and that is woman speaking for woman. Josephine Preston Peabody

has done this in her volume, 'Harvest Moon.' She gives the first rounded utterance of a woman's heart on the European war. She speaks for woman in a voice which comes to a full note in the present, but with the echoes of centuries of woman's sacrifice in the past. In the past, over these sacrifices, have been thrown the silence of woman's bondage. She sat by her hearth, and moaned; her protest was a dumb protest to nature, but nature unheeding went on its inevitable way, giving to this moaning hearthside figure the sacred power of multiplying the earth, and with it the voiceless fortitude of enduring the wastage and ruin of the flowers of her flesh and spirit, by the blasting passion of war. This has been woman's 'Heritage,' as Mrs. Marks poignantly expresses it:

"And if that men should cease from war,
What surety can there be
Of hardihood and sovereignty
And might, so battled for?
Whence shall a master draw his strength
And splendor, if so be, at length,
The strong man cease from war?

"Oh, he might some day light his mind
With fires that glowed when he lay blind;
The watch-fires of all motherkind,—
The ardors that encompassed him
While he lay hid, unmade and dim,
Beleaguered as a bonden thrall,
With her lone body for a wall.
And she, his stronghold of a year

Against the armaments of fear,—
Her arms his wreathèd cherubim,
Fought with the hosts of hell for him,
And smiling in the eyes of Death,
Tore from her heart his gift of breath.

"Yet, 'Whence shall be their hardihood,
If men forbear to spill men's blood?'

"From her uncounted agony
Through climbing ages all worn by
Could he not learn the way to die,
Transfigured with some radiant Why?
From the same wells of hero-stuff,
He still might draw duress enough
To dare and suffer,— be, and build;
Till some far flaming Dream fulfilled,
Made the loud song in every vein
Sing triumph to her, for her pain;
Triumph, of one more glorious way
Then plunder for a beast of prey;
Triumph at last, against all odds
Set up by the indifferent gods!

"Man-child,— the starveling without help,
Less able than a tiger's whelp,—
Housed only, once, in her embrace,
Weak bud of the destroying race!
O fool and blind, and battled for,
Whose strength is this you spill in war,
But hers? — who laughed the stars to scorn,
When you were born.—
When you were born.

"In this hour of her greatest sacrifice, under the most appalling load of pain and bitterness the

world has yet made her bear, the spirit of woman rebels. This war, it is claimed, will bring to the surface of humanity the realization of many ideals, but there are none so vital, none that have the power of making the future so secure, as the spiritual awakening of woman to her possession of life. She has dropped intuition by the wayside of the centuries. She has arrived at the consciousness that her position is more than a partnership. The responsibility she has, since the beginning of time, assumed in perpetuating human life has turned in this hour its other aspects to her gaze, and reason has forced her to take note of it; she must cure the callous indifference of man, redeem his failure, and conserve life. Dimly, gropingly, she has come to realize that nature is on her side. This is the message of 'Harvest Moon.' It is as if, with a regretful and backward glance at the futility of man destroying man, to agree upon the terms of living, she frankly proclaims that the future must substitute a basis of agreement that will suppress, indeed wholly eliminate, this agency which destroys life."

"All this I acknowledge, but how render the message so man will heed?" I asked.

"That is just the point which seems to me to give this collection its extraordinary value. Mrs. Marks does not reach to this illuminating faith over pathways of abstractions which give no reality to her counsels of hope. She deepens a dark truth to make more convincing and desirous a lustrous truth. The zeal which gives to the imag-

inative spirit its vision of the future, works with an equal and terrible finality, upon the fate that will fall upon the world, should the curtain of denial be dropped between that desirable future and our hopes. The symbol she evokes cannot escape serious attention. With a vivid prophecy, beyond our revocation, she inscribes upon the imagery and haunting stillness of a picture, a thought whose substance is appalling and arresting. I have in mind Mrs. Marks' poem, 'Harvest Moon,' from which subtly flows all the hopes and fears, the clear-eyed and wistful wonder of the glory and purpose of life, in the poems in her volume. Though the poem is well-known to you I want to read it," and Cassandra gave:

"Over the twilight field,
Over the glimmering field
And bleeding furrows, with their sodden yield
Of sheaves that still did wreathe,
After the scythe;
The teeming field, and darkly overstrewn
With all the garnered fullness of that moon,—
Two looked upon each other.
One was a Woman, men had called their mother:
And one the Harvest Moon.

"And one the Harvest Moon
Who stood, who gazed
On those unquiet gleanings, where they bled;
Till the lone Woman said:

"'But we were crazed . . .
We should laugh now together, I and you;

We two.
You, for your ever dreaming it was worth
A star's while to look on, and light the earth;
And I, for ever telling to my mind
Glory it was and gladness, to give birth
To human kind.
I gave the breath,— and thought it not amiss,
I gave the breath to men,
For men to slay again;
Lording it over anguish, all to give
My life, that men might live,
For this.

" ' You will be laughing now, remembering
We called you once Dead World, and barren thing,
Yes, so we called you then,
You, far more wise
Than to give life to men.'

" Over the field that there
Gave back the skies
A scattered upward stare
From sightless eyes,
The furrowed field that lay
Striving awhile, through many a bleeding dune
Of throbbing clay,— but dumb and quiet soon,
She looked; and went her way,
The Harvest Moon."

" That poem was written in 1914, when the sudden rush of war, like a tidal wave, went sweeping through men's hearts," said Jason.

" Yes; and the backwash left a desolate beach of anguish and passion," Cassandra replied. " From the area of desolated moods, Mrs. Marks'

mind gathered the wreckage of driftwood, and in these poems her imagination is burning that fuel: the flames are a visioned life, exquisitely colored. The intensity of these visions leaves no mistake of their cleansing virtue."

"The great forces that have been at work upon her sympathies, are forces that demand absolutely all that one has to give," observed Jason. "There is no withholding of any element for one's personal mood. I think Mrs. Marks gives splendidly of herself in these poems. There must have been a toll upon the spirit in writing them; but beauty, and the conviction that is born of beauty, has amply compensated her."

"I seemed to see," I ventured an opinion, "an originality in these poems that has less to do with the theme, than the ideas upon which the theme turns. In this respect, the book has not a conventional note; a gratification that will be deeply felt, especially where it is so easy for commonplace viewpoints to intrude. The poem 'To a Day' is a good illustration of what I mean. There is an idea in the poem which well-nigh leaves you breathless."

"Between the first harvest moon of 1914 and that other harvest moon of 1916, these poems, dedicated to the women of Europe, were written," Cassandra picked up the threads of her discourse. "From the earlier poem, in the passage beginning, 'Glory it was and gladness to give birth,' the reader will see in those lines, the darkness which lay upon the spirit of the poet, and how

she groped through it to weave that picture, which one cannot forget, of the bewildered woman and the mocking moon. During these two years, this poet has felt for all the women of the world; not only felt, but here gives voice to their greatest hopes. It has been a furnace, these two years, yet the spirit of the poet has not for a moment hesitated to walk through it, and come out golden in the glory of these sapphics, the ' Harvest Moon: 1916 ':

" Moon, slow rising, over the trembling sea-rim,
Moon of the lifted tides and their folded burden,
Look, look down. And gather the blinded oceans,
Moon of compassion.

" Come, white Silence, over the one sea pathway:
Pour with hallowing hands on the surge and outcry,
Silver flame; and over the famished blackness,
Petals of moonlight.

" Once again, the formless void of a world-wreck
Gropes its way through the echoing dark of chaos;
Tide on tide, to the calling, lost horizons,—
One in the darkness.

" You that veil the light of the all-beholding,
Shed white tidings down to the dooms of longing,
Down to the timeless dark: and the sunken treasures,
One in the darkness.

" Touch and harken,— under the shrouding silver,
Rise and fall, the heart of the sea and its legions,
All and one; one with the breath of the deathless,
Rising and falling.

"Touch and waken so, to a far hereafter,
Ebb and flow, the deep, and the dead in their longing:
Till at last, on the hungering face of the waters,
There shall be Light.

"Light of Light, give us to see, for their sake.
Light of Light, grant them eternal peace;
And let light perpetual shine upon them;
Light, everlasting."

"And will there be Light for Ireland?" asked Psyche.

"God knows whether the particular kind of light she wants will be the best for her," Jason answered.

"One may well think so," I said; "for the belief is that the Irish people, as a whole, were not in support of the Revolutionary Brotherhood. But whether or not, the action of the group on last Easter Sunday, and the price the leaders paid for their unsuccessful blow at the authority of England, has swept through the country — and indeed, through a large part of the world, with a magnificent spiritual prestige. Englishmen as well as Irishmen, Americans as well as either, whatever may be their attitude towards the motives, have openly expressed their admiration for the idealism which prompted the quixotic deed. Though the deed came to nothing but a few ashes on the altar of Ireland's hopes, the idealism which flamed on that occasion is a message of sacrifice

and aspiration long to be remembered among the generations of men."

"That is because Ireland is a land of poets," exclaimed Jason. "The most practical agriculturist — who is also the editor of a paper devoted to farming interests — is a poet of the keenest mystical vision, of any in Great Britain to-day. In the church, in politics, law and scholarship, the poet is the essence of the Irish character. And when the rebellion broke forth last Easter, with its brief but impressive fury, it was organized, and conducted, by poets — and it was as weak and as firm as the imaginative idealism upon which it was founded. Not politicians, but poets, were martyred for the cause of Ireland and liberty. Futile and impracticable, as the revolt proved to be, they were poets, and not political patriots, who had the courage to strike the blow. Poets and not politicians laid down their lives for what they conceived to be a service and an inspiration to their fellow countrymen. The politicians condemned the rebellion as inopportune, unjustifiable from the point of view of expediency. It was the beautiful dream of a group of poets: the attempt to shatter the yoke of England, and establish an Irish Republic. For two generations, Irish politicians at Westminster, with varying hopes, fought with the weapons of debate, for a political principle. Victory was almost theirs when the European war broke out. In all that time they did not accomplish what a small group of dream-intoxicated poets accomplished in a few hours.

Grant that the Irish Republic lived but for a few days; it did come into being, and was proclaimed to the world. And the echo of those few days will live longer in the memory of the world than two generations of political agitation at Westminster."

"And here is James Stephens, the Irish poet," I said, "paying his tribute, which is both a lament and an exultation, to his country and countrymen of the rebellion, in this slim volume, 'Green Branches.' He sings of 'The Autumn in Ireland: 1915,' 'The Spring in Ireland: 1916,' and in the mood of 'Joy Be With Us,' as a supplication. The first poem is full of settled melancholy, a hopelessness that can find no way through the dark future. He makes the autumn mood symbolize a national despair:

"Straying apart in sad and mournful way,
Alone, or with my heart for company,
Keeping the tone of a dejected day
And a bewilderment that came to me;
I said — The Spring
Will never come again, and there is end
Of everything.

"Day after day
The sap will ebb away from the great tree,
And when the sap is gone
Then piteously
She tumbles to the clay:
And we say only — Such a one
Had pleasant shade, but there is end of her.

"And you, and even you, the year
Will drain and dry, and you will disappear.

"The significance to me, of that 'will drain and dry' phrase is, that upon the top of all those other circumstances which have taken the youth and manhood of Ireland, is the war. Mr. Stephens visions Ireland as the very Niobe of nations. He acknowledges his lament and despair for his country, by drawing a likeness between himself and the bird in the desolation of the woods, who sings a 'failing song, The times had caught on him,' in

". . . autumn boughs he tried a wonted lay,
And was abashed to find his music grim
As the crow's song."

"The poet then," remarked Jason, "finds that his country's mood is his own. He will make his personal contribution a sacrifice. He will replace the poet's joy and possession of the world with the man's responsibility and fear for the powers, pursuing with evil, the spirit he loves:

"And so, behold,
I am a saddened elf;
And, as a deer
Flies timidly to shade,
I fly to laughter and I hide myself,
And couch me in the coverts that I made
Against those bold ambitions, and forswear
The palm, the prize, or what it is of gear
A poet gets with his appointed share
Of bread and beer."

"It is strange, that tone of exultation in tribute, which the poet gives to the poem, 'Spring in Ireland: 1916,'" said Psyche. "In a sense that hour was more swiftly and darkly sharp for Ireland. But to the poet, the strength and beauty of the Irish spirit were evoked in the hour of defeat. It is the magnificent spiritual prestige of a race shining forth in the hour of defeat. The noblest and best, making the highest sacrifice. It is the most beautiful of these poems," and she read:

"Do not forget my charge I beg of you;
That of what flow'rs you find of fairest hue
And sweetest odour you do gather those
Are best of all the best — A fragrant rose,
A tall calm lily from the waterside,
A half-blown poppy leaning at the side
Its graceful head to dream among the corn,
Forget-me-nots that seem as though the morn
Had tumbled down and grew into the clay,
And hawthorn buds that swing along the way
Easing the hearts of those who pass them by
Until they find contentment — Do not cry,
But gather buds, and with them greenery
Of slender branches taken from a tree
Well bannered by the spring that saw them fall:
Then you, for you are cleverest of all
Who have slim fingers and are pitiful,
Brimming your lap with bloom that you may cull,
Will sit apart, and weave for every head
A garland of the flow'rs you gatheréd.

"Be green upon their graves, O happy Spring,
For they were young and eager who are dead;

Of all things that are young and quivering
With eager life be they rememberéd:
They move not here, they have gone to the clay,
They cannot die again for liberty;
Be they remembered of their land for aye;
Green be their graves and green their memory.

" Fragrance and beauty come in with the green,
The ragged bushes put on sweet attire,
The birds forget how chill these airs have been,
The clouds bloom out again and move in fire;
Blue is the dawn of day, calm is the lake,
And merry sounds are fitful in the morn;
In covert deep the young blackbirds awake,
They shake their wings and sing upon the morn.

" At springtime of the year you came and swung
Green flags above the newly-greening earth;
Scarce were the leaves unfolded, they were young,
Nor had outgrown the wrinkles of their birth:
Comrades they thought you of their pleasant hour,
They had but glimpsed the sun when they saw you;
They heard your songs e'er birds had singing power,
And drank your blood e'er that they drank the dew.

" Then you went down, and then, and as in pain,
The Spring affrighted fled her leafy ways,
The clouds came to the earth in gusty rain,
And no sun shone again for many days:
And day by day they told that one was dead,
And day by day the season mourned for you,
Until that count of woe was finishéd,
And Spring remembered all was yet to do.

" She came with mirth of wind and eager leaf,
With scampering feet and reaching out of wings,

She laughed among the boughs and banished grief,
And cared again for all her baby things;
Leading along the joy that has to be,
Bidding her timid buds think on the May,
And told that summer comes with victory,
And told the hope that is all creatures stay.

"Go Winter now unto your own abode,
Your time is done, and Spring is conqueror
Lift up with all your gear and take your road,
For she is here and brings the sun with her;
Now are we resurrected, now are we,
Who lay so long beneath an icy hand,
New-risen into life and liberty,
Because the Spring is come into our land.

"In other lands they may,
With public joy or dole along the way,
With pomp and pageantry and loud lament
Of drums and trumpets, and with merriment
Of grateful hearts, lead into rest and sted
The nation's dead.

"If we had drums and trumpets, if we had
Aught of heroic pitch or accent glad
To honor you as bids tradition old,
With banners flung or draped in mournful fold,
And pacing cortège; these would we not bring
For your last journeying.

"We have no drums or trumpets; naught have we
But some green branches taken from a tree,
And flowers that grow at large in mead and vale;
Nothing of choice have we, or of avail
To do you honor as our honor deems,
And as your worth beseems.

"Sleep drums and trumpets yet a little time:
All ends and all begins, and there is chime
At last where discord was, and joy at last
Where woe wept out her eyes: be not downcast,
Here is prosperity and goodly cheer,
For life does follow death, and death is here."

"Splendid!" murmured Cassandra.

"Yes," I said. "A bright, cleansing note runs through the poem, a note that rises above the pitiful outer and temporary circumstance of the event. In other lands, public joy and dole, pomp and pageantry would 'lead into rest and sted the nation's dead,' but Ireland would not, if she could, as 'bids tradition old,' bring these trappings for the 'last journeying' of the martyrs. The spirit is too profoundly reverent, too conscious, in a new light, of the vision in the deed, to be otherwise."

"War — but no laughter in that mood," Jason exclaimed. "Dreams and prophecy, instead."

"For that kind of philosophy we have to turn to Mr. Oppenheim," I said. "And in doing so we turn to a great democratic message."

"The tremendous force displayed by Mr. Oppenheim in his previous volume 'Songs for the New Age,'" Jason said, "was the kind of force which emanates from a prophet who is under the spell of an absorbing vision. The utterance came forth from an impetuous conviction; the substance burns with truths whose origins are as inscrutable as they are unalterable. The whole impression

of that book was taken from life, the complex existence of the modern world; and it was supremely significant that that life's social mood and temper, was habited with spiritual visions. The book was, in its final analysis, a chant of democracy, but of a democracy elevated from the gross and irrational bombast of the propagandist, into the ritual of beauty. The mood was so reverently symbolized, in all variations, that for the first time in our day, and our verse, the creed of social balances and aspiration present its petition with reason and dignity; and at the same time was full of a passionate sincerity, fervor, and magic of the spirit. It was not only the tolerant attitude and sympathy displayed, which made those poems notable, but the visualizing instinct which made apparent those images behind the veil of existence, so often baffling to our understanding.

"In 'War and Laughter,'" Jason continued, "Mr. Oppenheim expresses this same substance, rather with intensity though, than expansion. Life, for him, is still an explicable battleground, but man is still pursuing his conflict blindly. The poet sums it all up in the poem 'Creed,'—sums up the bewildering forces which take the individual out of his security, and makes his experiences a series of antagonistic emotions. But for his own part, he works out a sane philosophy, the kind of philosophy it is difficult to make men understand and accept." And Jason read:

"After all,
With clean laughter and a hard soul,
I greet the morning.

"My darkness was full of disturbance:
The philosophers and the scientists and the doctors
were wrangling together:
And each grew angry with greed for my soul,
And angrier to find the others also greedy for me.

"My friend, the Mechanist, eyed me:
'You are dull,' said he, 'if you reject my belief . . .
Life, sir, is a rearrangement of atoms:
You are a machine:
The Universe is purposeless:
It contains no more to-day than it did a millennium
of eons ago.
My chemico-physical friend: this is the fiat of Science.'

"'Thanks,' said I . . .
'This relief is great.
Good-by, Old Ethics, and my Immortal Soul;
This machine is quit of you.'

"'Hold,' cried a voice,
And my friend, the Finalist, buttoned me . . .
'Who rearranged the atoms?
Who wrought the eye that beholds the shows of this
Earth?
Who wrought Man, the highest?
There is a plan working out;
We move toward "one far-off divine event". . .
Believe this, or die damned."

" ' Excellent,' said I . . .
' I am glad to know I am planned and moved . . .
Farewell, Originality, farewell, Responsibility —
Use me, O Rearranger of Atoms! '

" ' Both wrong,' came a sore whisper:
And behold, there stood friend What-do-you-call-him? . . .
At any rate he thus delivered himself . . .
' Ahem, of course, as it were, the world's a machine,
But then, too, purposes invade it . . .
It's on the make . . .
What make? Who knows?
It may go here, it may go there . . .

" ' A vital impetus impels it,
A sheaf of tendencies expands through it . . .
There is no goal . . .
Eternal Creativeness, Variability, Newness:
The past bound up in the present makes the future,
And Man's the crest of the wave.'

" ' Greatly obliged,' said I,
' Come on, Old Vital Impetus:
Come, Herd of Tendencies;
Let's start a fresh creation to-morrow morning.'

" ' Eh, what is this? '
Alas, I was confronted by an antique Dualist:
' Do you not know you stand in the clutch of Error?
Rash man, the World's not One, and neither is it Many:
The World is Two:
There's body and there's spirit,
And superimposed on the natural order is the moral order . . .

There is a moral world: an ethical framework:
And to its laws your soul must bow . . .
Be ethical, or be damned.'

" ' Good God! ' I sighed,
' How simple . . .
I'll study the code and know just what to do . . .
An end of worry! '

" A dozen voices spoke at once:
' You say good God . . . remember the children of Abraham . . .'
' Nay,' said another, ' Christ was the Lord Incarnate . . .'
' Christ? Buddha! '
' Buddha? Mahomet, the only true prophet of Allah! '
' Tut! it's all a neurosis: a mere subconscious impulsion! '
' Oh, no, it's economic determinism! '
' Matter? There is no matter . . . the world of sense is illusion . . .
Thought is reality.'

" The night grew dark and full of disturbance . . .
And I knew then that the philosophers, the scientists, the doctors and the divines
Were all greedy after my soul . . .

" It was well that morning broke,
Well that revolt swept through me, lifting up,
Well, that after all,
With clean laughter and a hard soul,
I could greet the morning.

" ' Friends all,' said I,
' Perhaps Life is what you each say it is . . .
But I suspect that Life is both less and more . . .
I suspect that the human mind is a very limited organ . . .
I suspect that it loves simplicity, that it loves to reduce multiplicity to unity,
That it craves graspable formulas and prescriptions:
And I suspect that the formula of each man is the man himself:
The sort of breakfast he cares for, and the kind of pride he indulges in,
And his happiness or misery in his love-life,
And the kind of impression he wants to make . . .
A healthy belly rejoices that it is chemico-physical,
And a hardy ego enjoys being a god,
And a methodical card-index soul is glad of a planned-out universe,
And a wild gipsy believes in chaos,
Whereas a child longs for God, the Father.

" ' Now, friends all . . .
I reject none of your formulas: no, not a one . . .
They are excellent tools to do excellent work . . .
And then, too, they keep you in pride and healthy defiance:
But as to accepting them: that is another matter . . .
Rather will I discover what I am,
And accept those tools which will help to unfold me further in selfhood,
And such things as I need for my own pride and my own tasks.
And I will accept them very gingerly,
Not as Truth, my friends, but as Tools alone . . .

And one only thing shall be a dogma with me:
Namely, that little is known: and that I know very little . . .

" ' So I will write me songs that please my own soul,
And walk in the garden and smell the roses and forget-me-nots,
And drink a cocktail, if I have a mind to,
And give myself to the mystery of this enveloping world,
Send out my feelers through the dark to the untouchable stars,
And the almost equally untouchable men and women around me . . .
Sensitively respond to the weather, and the splendors of art, and the life of cities,
And find me a woman who meets me with glad responses,
And love mightily . . .

" ' And I shall be as little afraid of laughter as of tears . . .
Read philosophy and science with zest, and test them out against the smell of honeysuckle . . .
Ponder on the universe, and then kiss the lips of my adored one . . .
And I shall be unafraid of the mightiest purposes . . .
If I see for my soul an unfolding, I shall strive to unfold it so,
And if I find friends who can share the good of life with me, I shall bind them to my heart . . .

" ' For, dear Doctrinaires,
I too am greedy after my own soul:

And I believe Life is greater than any of our statements about it,
And I believe in Experience, as a realization beyond the power of thought,
And there is something in me that can arise and laugh freshly after defeat,
Yea, even after absorbing intricate logic of philosophical web-spinners.

" ' A man before these mysteries,
A man against vastness and multiple Life,
With awe, reverence, impudence, gaiety, anger, delight,
I give myself to the glories of this day,
I move on by the North Star of Self.

" ' And even if this be creed also,
I say, let it be so . . .
It is at least my own!

" ' So, after all,
With clean laughter and a hard soul,
I greet the morning.'

" This is the existence that he accepts for himself," Jason went on, " and it flows between war and laughter. Those two words denote the poles between which man's life is bound. It is, however, a philosophy that has its roots in the earth, and its flower in the air of eternity. The poet has too profound a grasp of reality to deny that the very basis of life is war; the struggle that perpetually goes on in man, between his desires and the things to be possessed; between his body

and his spirit. There is a weapon against the absolute domination of this force — and that weapon is laughter. Man can turn against the darkness of his problems the light of his natural joys; he should find in the recognition of this strength that he possesses, his salvation from eternal despair, and gain through this salvation, the faith that both life and the world are good. 'Behold, though you are terrible,' he tells the world, we

"... we laugh back, and treat you, at best, as a jolly comrade.
But it's the wickedest child that is the darling ...
We *are* your darlings, are we not?
Truly now fine impudent young gods have risen to companion you,
Yes, to transcend you, and by transcending, bring you to new fulfilments.

"For sublimity has bungled ...
It simply spewed out Life, haphazard,
Till by divine accidents, and out of the deadliest purposes,
We were born: to see: to know: to take hold:
To laugh away fear.

"Laughter saves us:
Still more than half of us is buried in the quicksands,
Still we suffer,
Still we doubt and are damned ...
But comes the moment when we take a square look at ourselves,

And seeing how absurd our antics are, laugh and are healed . . .

"And so, perhaps, the laughing animal shall save creation . . .

"Interfused with this message," Jason still went on, and he seemed so happy and anxious in his interpretation, we did not interrupt him, "is a sense of the richness of the world. If Mr. Oppenheim's poems lacked this, all of their fundamental meaning and reality would fall out like the bottom from a tub. Grant that he makes his dissatisfaction felt, of the injustices and tyranny of human actions, of the sorry spectacle modern civilization makes of itself, in the relations between the strong and the weak; of his groping doubts, sometimes, of the beneficent scheme and purposes of the universe; grant the sad confession he makes in the poem '1914 — and After'; grant the bitter iconoclasm of his poem 'The New God,' — and still you must grant that his heart holds in its simplicities, a reassuring faith in the divinity of common things and experiences."

Jason paused a moment, and looked upon the scene about him as if listening to some mystical but imperative voice. "Though it is not quite the time, the spirit is all here," he said with elusive meaning. He had opened his book again, and turned the leaves to a page which he held open with his forefinger. "As a final word for and from Mr. Oppenheim," he began again, "I am going to read this sonnet, which is not only

an appropriate conclusion to his philosophy, but an expression of this "— waving his hand to indicate the scene —" setting and its spirit." Then he opened the book and read:

"Now golden October, crowned with the grape, is singing,
While the javelin winds against the woods are hurled,
Glorious from the blue the sun is flinging
His rain-rinsed brilliance on the vivid world:
And the wine-mad month in red and gold regalia,
Scattering leaves, sowing valley and hill,
Goes out dancing to death in a Bacchanalia,
Laughing, singing, for she dies with a will.

"Fully lived has the year, so she dies in laughter:
For all that spends itself, is ready for death . . .
O my beloved, let us *live* hereafter,
Pour ourselves in each other, spend our breath,
Love in the uttermost loving, so that when quaffing
Death's black liquor, we toast one another, laughing."

XV

"A FEW BRAVE DROPS WERE OURS"

I EXPECTED Jason to be almost fanatically enthusiastic when we came to our next discussion. He expanded, as it were, in a dream that wrapped him like a mist — a glorious mist through which the sun washed a crimson-tinted glow. I feared for a while that the weather would put a damper upon his exultant mood, for the day broke with a dull, threatening sky. But by noon it had cleared, and the countryside, when we reached The Farm, was bathed in the glory of the mid-September sunlight. On our way to the woods I noticed that same god-like erectness of body, with its air of command and largeness, which Jason brought down to The Farm on that summer day when the spiritual strength of Robinson's poetry had taught him how to triumph over the delusions of life. He led us a rapid pace up the Derry Road, and turned into the path leading to our grove with a swing that had music and exaltation in it. When we reached the pine he stood, opened the book he carried — the act was so compelling that it would have been sacrilege for us to do less than stand also — and began to read, in a voice which flowed out on the opening lines with

mingled pity and scorn, rising, on the closing lines, to a full round note of triumph and exultation. What he read was Alan Seeger's ode for the American soldiers fallen for France.

There was a light in Jason's face when he stopped reading. A light that made us silent. "I need not tell you the name of the poem from which those lines were taken," he said after a moment, "nor need I tell you the occasion for which they were written. You know, you must know. Only this need I say, that it is the voice of a man who saw the Gleam. I knew Alan Seeger; and when I say that, I mean I knew him as well as man was able to know him. We know him better now — that he is dead. We know him as the Sir Galahad — for the English-speaking world — of the European war. . . . I might have heard that chant breaking triumphantly from his wounded body at Belloy-en-Santere, of which the Egyptian Rif Bear speaks, sweeping past him to the charge, like the voice of God saying, 'On to victory for Justice and Democracy,' had fate taught me in childhood an indifference to the Mosaic tablet of instructions — but I missed what Seeger and his companions gained. God knows I am, however, one of those of whom Seeger's friend, John Hall Wheelock, speaks in the tribute he wrote to the memory of the soldier-poet, when he says, 'Seeger had become, in a sense, the mouthpiece of many Americans who in heart, at least, are anything but neutral, and who in heart have responded to his challenging and exalted celebra-

tion of the cause which he himself, with life and song, served so passionately and so completely.'"

One by one, as if by an almost unconscious desire not to distract Jason, we had slipped into our places on the ground. Jason still stood, leaning with book in hand against the trunk of a tree. The man had seemed under the personal influence of his dead friend. I could see that when he thought of his poetry he wished to shake himself free. Yet it was only by a gradual stage that he succeeded in doing so. His emotions had been deeply moved, and it was only when he felt surer of himself that he went on.

"Poets have been killed in action," he began; "poets already famous, poets unknown and in the first flush of confidence and creation. To these latter, the war has been a nourishing mother of aspiration and vision. There has been something sacerdotal in the way these young poets of all lands have laid down their lives upon the terrible altar of war; their spirits, changing as it were, in the fullness of their gifts to humanity. Whoever can visualize — and who cannot? — these brave figures, marching undaunted into the darkness, must see a glory about them which comes less from the ordinary physical bravery that men know, than from that inner glory of spiritual dream in which is the irresistible victory of life over death, of right over wrong, of personal conviction over all the other considerations of false peace and the sensuous ease of security. They have gone forth as children, erect in the stature

of the larger manhood; the rosy bloom of life upon their countenances, of the promise of the future in the art through which they had glimpsed the image of beauty and heard the rapt appeals of truth. In the last hour of their lives, they have been like roses cast into vinegar. It was so Rupert Brooke went, England's hero-poet, and it was so Alan Seeger went, America's hero-poet who, fighting and dying for France, also fought and died for the conscience of America.

"Both these poets," continued Jason with critical discernment, "have presented the critic with a task. That task is to resist the dictates of sentiment. Both were poets of acceptable gifts before they became soldiers, but after becoming soldiers they developed into poets of compelling gifts. One could leave or take what they wrote before they went through the spiritual baptism of war; but one has no choice now, cannot escape a possession which is the common heritage of humanity. It is scarcely a question of differentiation of power, as an intensification of values. In one leap, as it were, each poet compassed a mystery — the mystery that forced a stream through the being of the poet, and two marriageable elements yearned across opposite banks at the promise of union. The war bridged that mystery, and the elements leaped across to the embrace of experience. With Seeger it was an embrace which carried in its action, a fatalism whose serenity was a particularly vivid force, a force that had something new in its substance of

sacrificial decisions in modern humanity. Among the 'Last Poems, 1916,' all the product of Alan Seeger's final period, there is a group of twelve sonnets, more personal, in a sense, than the other poems which express his feeling and philosophy in relation to his part in the war. The sixth of these sonnets presents the interaction of a forsaken desire upon the poet's serene mood of fatality.

"Mr. Archer, in his admirably balanced introduction to this first and final gathering of Alan Seeger's poems, says that the book 'contains the undesigned, but all the more spontaneous and authentic, biography of a very rare spirit. It contains the record of a short life, into which was crowded far more of keen experience and high aspiration — of the thrill of sense and the rapture of soul — than it is given to most men, even of high vitality, to extract from a life twice the length.' If I do not quite agree with Mr. Archer that the message of Alan Seeger's art was 'not a philosophy but an irresistible emotion,' I can agree most heartily that in these poems there is a 'direct perception, an intuition, of the beauty and wonder of the universe — an intuition too overpowering to be seriously disturbed by the existence of pain and evil, some of which, at any rate, has its value as a foil, a background, to joy.' I should say there was a philosophy, which expressed itself through emotion. And from it the poet blew all the vapors of abstraction, and proved the tenets by immolation. He

was not, which may come to what Mr. Archer means, a philosopher, but a fragment of philosophy in himself. This is apparent in that notable piece of prose he wrote from the trenches, 'As a Soldier Thinks,' and from the scraps which Mr. Archer prints from his letters, in the introduction to this volume. And it is here in the poems, with no less conviction; and only with the difference which utterance in verse gives to thought and feelings.

"The pure quality of the poetic temperament in Alan Seeger, Mr. Archer states with conclusive discernment. 'There are three more or less clearly-marked elements in a poet's equipment,' he writes; 'observation, passion, reflection, or in simpler terms, seeing, feeling and thinking. The first two are richly represented in the following poems, the third, as was natural, much less so. The poet was too fully occupied in garnering impressions and experiences to think of coordinating and interpreting them. That would have come later; and later, too, would have come a general deepening of the spiritual content of his work. There had been nothing in either his outward or his inward life that could fairly be called suffering and struggle. He had not sounded the depths of human experience, which is as much as to say that neither had he risen to the heights. This he no doubt recognized himself, and was not thinking merely of the date of composition when he called his pre-war poems "Juvenilia." Great emotions, and perhaps great sorrows, would have

come to him in due time, and would have deepened and enriched his vein of song. The first great emotion which found him, when he rallied to the trumpet call of France and freedom, did, as a matter of fact, lend new reality and poignancy to his verse; but the soldier's life left him small leisure for composition. We must regard his work, then, as a fragment, a mere foretaste of what he might have achieved had his life been prolonged. But, devoted though he was to his art, he felt that to live greatly is better than to write greatly. The unfulfilment of his poetic hopes and dreams meant the fulfilment of a higher ambition.'

"Yet the 'Juvenilia,' as Alan Seeger chose to characterize all those poems written before the war," said Jason, "are scarcely those inappropriate beginnings which grace or disgrace a poetic career. They have, as should be right, the affinity with youthful associations, and that mood of pensiveness which give a quality to the drama of youth. They are touched with the color, fragrance, and magnificence of the poet's Mexican recollections, and show an influence of classical culture, from which source Alan Seeger evoked his first images of beauty. In the 'Ode to Natural Beauty,' which opens the volume, we find the poet confessing that 'My breast burns with lust for splendors unrevealed,' and in the lines,

"My youth with visions of such glory nursed,
Ye have beheld, nor ever seen my feet

> On any venture set, but 'twas the thirst
> For Beauty willed them —

we note that desire in his passion which burned to such clear flame in the poems born of the war.

"In these war poems the poet speaks unfalteringly from the soul and from no other source but the soul. 'The Aisne (1914–15),' 'Champagne, 1915–16,' 'Hosts,' 'Maktoob,' 'Liebstod,' 'A Message to America,' the 'Ode in Memory of the American Volunteers Fallen for France,' and 'I Have a Rendezvous with Death,' the spirit of the man is baptismal with the living fire of poetry."

Jason paused. Still standing, there came into his face again that light we had seen when he read those noble lines after leading us to the grove. Somehow we understood the meaning of that light and waited in silence. We were rewarded when he read with unforgettable emotion, "I Have a Rendezvous with Death":

> "I have a rendezvous with Death
> At some disputed barricade,
> When Spring comes back with rustling shade
> And apple-blossoms fill the air —
> I have a rendezvous with Death
> When Spring brings back blue days and fair.
>
> "It may be he shall take my hand
> And lead me into his dark land
> And close my eyes and quench my breath —
> It may be I shall pass him still.
> I have a rendezvous with Death

On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

"God knows 'twere better to be deep
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear . . .
But I've a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

"No, he did not fail it," softly murmured Jason. "And with Death at that rendezvous at Belloy-en-Santere, were two other invisible companions — Fame and Immortality!"

"If man should in the next hundred years forget — which is hardly conceivable — the incident of the war itself, he cannot forget the attitude of the individual toward it, and who experienced it through his idealism for the cause in which he believed. It will hardly be the epic dimensions of the conflict that posterity will get in such a case, but the personal reaction of the war upon the individual. That is what we get in Alan Seeger's case. For the other we must turn to the poems of Robert W. Service. 'In the Rhymes of a Red Cross Man,' we get the war. Its tragedy, humor, sacrifice, suffering, heroism, cruelty, appalling bigness, excitement and terror. 'We

have been inquiring for the poetry of the war,' Witter Bynner wrote, in a review of this book. 'In my judgment, here it is.' And that judgment, I can echo," I said.

"This is the best book Mr. Service has given us since his first volume, 'Songs of a Sourdough,'" said Cassandra.

"In that book, as Mr. Bynner says, the kinship to Kipling is obvious," I added, "and, as in this latest collection, the resemblance is not as an 'imitator only but as his successor.' The 'Rhymes of a Red Cross Man' is what 'Kipling might have made of the War, had his genius still been young.' In Scottish and Cockney dialect, the best of the poems are narratives —'immortal visions of an epic day.' If you will have patience with my rendering of Scottish dialect — for I don't at all pretend to do it well — I'll read 'The Haggis of Private McPhee,' which is a remarkable blend of humor and tragedy." Then I read:

"'Hae ye heard whit ma auld mither's postit tae me?
It fair maks me hamesick,' says Private McPhee.
'And whit did she send ye?' says Private McPhun,
As he cockit his rifle and bleezed at a Hun.
'A haggis! A haggis!' says Private McPhee;
'The brawest big haggis I ever did see.
And think! it's the morn when fond memory turns
To haggis and whuskey — the Birthday o' Burns.
We maun find a dram; then we'll ca' in the rest
O' the lads, and we'll hae a Burns' Nicht wi' the best.'

"'Be ready at sundoon,' snapped Sergeant McCole;
'I want you two men for the List'nin' Patrol.'
Then Private McPhee looked at Private McPhun:
'I'm thinkin', ma lad, we're confoundedly done.'
Then Private McPhun looked at Private McPhee:
'I'm thinkin' 'ould chap, it's a' aff wi' oor spree.'
But up spoke their crony, wee Wullie McNair:
'Jist lea' yer braw haggis for me tae prepare;
And as for the dram, if I search the camp roun',
We maun hae a drappie tae jist haud it doon.
Sae rin, lads, and think, though the nicht it be black
O' the haggis that's waitin' ye when ye get back.'

"My! but it wis waesome on Naebuddy's Land,
And the deid they were rottin' on every hand.
And the rockets like corpse candles hauntit the sky,
And the winds o' destruction went shudderin' by.
There wis skelpin' o' bullets and skirlin' o' shells,
And breengin' o' bombs and a thoosand death-knells;
But cooryin' doon in a Jack Johnson hole
Little fashed the twa men o' the List'nin' Patrol.
For sweeter than honey and bricht as a gem
Wis the thocht o' the haggis that waitit for them.

"Yet alas! in oor moments o' sunniest cheer
Calamity's aften maist cruelly near.
And while the twa talked o' their puddin' divine
The Boches below them were howkin' a mine.
And while the twa cracked o' the feast they would hae,
The fuse it wis burnin' and burnin' away.
Then sudden a roar like the thunder o' doom,
A hell-leap o' flame . . . then the wheesht o' the tomb.

"'Haw, Jock! Are ye hurtit?' says Private McPhun.
'Ay, Geordie, they've got me; I'm fearin' I'm done.
It's ma leg; I'm jist thinkin' it's aff at the knee;
Ye'd best gang and leave me,' said Private McPhee.
'Oh leave ye I wunna,' says Private McPhun;
'And leave ye I canna, for though I micht run,
It's no faur I wud gang, it's no muckle I'd see:
I'm blindit, and that's whit's the maitter wi' me.'
Then Private McPhee sadly shakit his heid:
'If we bide here for lang, we'll be bidin' for deid.
And yet, Geordie lad, I could gang weel content
If I'd tasted that haggis ma auld mither sent.'
'That's droll,' says McPhun; 'ye've jist speakit ma mind.
Oh I ken it's a terrible thing tae be blind;
And yet it's no that that embitters ma lot —
It's missin' that braw muckle haggis ye've got.'
For a while they were silent; then up once again
Spoke Private McPhee, though he whussilt wi' pain:
'And why should we miss it? Between you and me
We've legs for tae run, and we've eyes for tae see.
You lend me your shanks and I'll lend you ma sicht,
And we'll baith hae a kyte-fu' o' haggis the nicht.'

"Oh, the sky it wis dourlike and dreepin' a wee,
When Private McPhee guidit Private McPhun.
Oh, the glaur it wis fylin' and crieshin' the grun,
When Private McPhee guidit Private McPhun.
'Keep clear o' them corpses — they're maybe no deid!
Haud on! There's a big muckle crater aheid.
Look oot! There's a sap; we'll be haein' a coup.

A staur-shell! For Godsake! Doun, lad, on yer
daup.
Bear aff tae yer richt. . . . Aw, yer jist daein' fine;
Before the nicht's faenished on haggis we'll dine.'

"There wis death and destruction on every hand;
There wis havoc and horror on Naebuddy's Land.
And the shell bickered doun wi' a crump and a glare,
And the hameless wee bullets were dingin' the air.
Yet on they went staggerin', a'cryin' doun
When the stutter and cluck o' a maxim crept roun'.
And the legs o' McPhun they were sturdy and stoot,
And McPhee on his back kept a bonnie look-oot.
'On, on, ma brave lad! We're no faur frae the
goal;
I can hear the braw sweerin' o' Sergeant McCole.'

"But strength has its leemit, and Private McPhun,
Wi' a sab and a curse fell his length on the grun'.
Then Private McPhee shoutit doon in his ear:
'Jist think o' the haggis! I smell it from here.
It's gushin' wi' juice, it's embaumin' the air;
It's steamin' for us, and we're — jist — aboot —
there.'
Then Private McPhun answers: 'Dommit, auld
chap!
For the sake of that haggis I'll gang till I drap.'
And he gets on his feet wi' a heave and a strain,
And onward he staggers in passion and pain.
And the flare and the glare and the fury increase,
Till you'd think they'd jist taken a' hell on a lease.
And on they go reelin' in peetiful plight,
And some one is shoutin' away on their right;
And someone is runnin', and noo they can hear
A sound like a prayer and a sound like a cheer;

And swift through the crash and the flash and the
din,
The lads o' the Hielands are bringin' them in.

"'They're baith sairly woundit, but is it no droll
Ho' they rave aboot haggis?' says Sergeant Mc-
Cole.
When hirplin alang comes wee Wullie McNair,
And they a' wonnert why he wis greetin' sae sair.
And he says: 'I'd jist liftit it oot o' the pot,
And there it lay steamin' and savoury hot,
When sudden I dooked at the fleech o' a shell,
And it — drapped on the haggis and dinged it tae
hell.'

"And oh but the lads were fair taken aback;
Then sudden the order wis passed tae attack,
And up from the trenches like lions they leapt,
And on through the nicht like a torrent they swept.
On, on, wi' their bayonets thirstin' before!
On, on tae the foe wi' a rush and a roar!
And wild to the welkin their battle-cry rang,
And doon on the Boches like tigers they sprang:
And there wisna a man but had death in his ee,
For, he thocht o' the haggis o' Private McPhee."

XVI

LUSTRAL WATERS

Our next discussion was indoors. One can never tell what September will do. Her true disposition is gentle; but once in a while she has a violent fit of melancholy. Then like a naughty child she gives full vent to a passion of wind and rain. All day she rages over field and through the woods with a temper that makes one wonder if she ever had a gentle nature; but at night, weary from the day's unceasing riot, she falls to quietude and sleep with a sob on the roof and a sigh down the chimney.

Jason and I went up to The Farm in a veritable tempest of wind and rain. They lashed us crossing the field from the car tracks. The ground was sodden with grass and leaves, treacherous to keep afoot on. Psyche and Cassandra were awaiting us in the shelter of the porch. "We didn't expect you up," they said when we reached the house.

"Did you think a little angry mood like this would keep us away?" I asked.

"It was a sort of blind adventure," Jason exclaimed, shaking his umbrella, "but I came along, with the firm conviction that dripping trees are

more attractive than a city full of dripping human beings. Besides I like to see the rain fall in the country. And when there is a wind to lash it the gods make an inspiring picture of their might."

"Of course, we can't go to the woods," said Psyche.

"Who wants to; or said they were going?" Jason asked with playful asperity.

Cassandra took him by the arm and led him indoors. Psyche and I followed.

We found Mrs. Dan sitting by a blazing log fire. "You dear lady," Jason greeted her. "You knew just what I wanted. That's the best inspiration," he pointed to the crackling logs, "that poetry can have on a day like this."

Psyche burst out laughing. "You silly, changeable, overgrown child," she said; "just now it was the wind and rain lashed by the gods across the open fields that you liked best, and now this cosy log fire with all the wet shut out."

"Really, madam, you should chastise your daughter for possessing a keen memory; it's not a sign of respect to mature persons like — myself, you know."

"Mumsie doesn't mind, do you, dearie?" Psyche caressed her mother.

Mrs. Dan got up to leave us to our discussion. "Please stay," I begged. "We're going to talk about Tagore. He is a favorite of yours, and I would like to feel that we were talking to you about him."

And Mrs. Dan remained.

"Did you see the attack Paul Elmer More made upon Tagore in *The Nation?*" asked Jason.

"Yes; but Lajpat Rai's answer quite disposes of his pretensions. Mr. More is an academic critic who has made a study of Eastern philosophy in its great books, and so for him nothing can come after them. Tagore is consequently a 'saccharine imitation.' Mr. Rai, I think, in the three points he makes, nullifies the attack, which I notice was followed, in the usual American custom, by another writer in *The Bellman.* He says that, first, 'It is not right to construct the social philosophy of a poet from a few scattered verses picked up from two of his collections, which have been especially translated for the Western reader.' Secondly, 'A poet is an artist first and anything afterwards. He does not aim at a systematic exposition of the science of life. His poems may disclose flashes of philosophic thought, but their chief claim on mankind is the art and not the logic involved therein.' And thirdly, 'It is hardly fair to make a comparison between pieces of devotional poetry and epic poetry like that of the "Bhagwat Gita." The prose poems of "Gitanjali" and "Fruit-Gathering" are the ecstatic utterances of a man head and shoulders in love. The theme of the "Gita" is the exhortation of Krishna to Arjuna, on his duty as a warrior, when "suddenly in the presence of two armies drawn up for battle," he refuses to perform it, being "filled with dismay at the thought of the carnage

to ensue." The path of love is not always the path of duty. In "Gitanjali" a devotee is speaking to the object of his love, his God. In "Bhagwat Gita" Krishna is speaking to a disciple, who, standing on a field of battle, has thrown away his arms in despair.'"

"I don't know about all that," remarked Jason; "but I do know, that a man who can tell such truths as Tagore told America in his lecture on 'Nationalism,' during his recent visit to this country, is beyond the censure of Mr. More."

"This new volume of Tagore's, 'Fruit-Gathering,' seems to me more important than any of his books since the first which he translated for us," said Psyche.

"Of the books we know," I said, "'Gitanjali' is the central and authentic message of Tagore's poetry. Even though 'The Crescent Moon,' 'The Gardener,' and such plays as 'The King of the Dark Chamber,' and 'The Post Office,' are the familiar possession of English readers, it may seem to some a little too much to claim for the 'Gitanjali' volume. But 'Gitanjali' *is* a religion. Allegorical and symbolical, these poems envisaged not one, but many, features of life. They were read by some as love poems; and so they are, but as Mr. Rai says, the love of a devotee for his God. Others read in them moral and ethical reflections on human experience; and to still others they were but deep mystical communings of a visionary, who had attained through contemplation and renunciation, a pure understanding of divine

causes in the world, and of their corresponding significance in eternity."

"It was the impression these poems made upon the Western mind," said Psyche, "that was singularly interesting."

"Yes," remarked Jason; "the material and practical character of Western thought was made to realize through 'Gitanjali,' the insecurity of the reality it had been accustomed to regard as of supreme importance. We found something in the message of this Eastern mystic which gave us a grasp upon the actual purposes flowing in and through the soul of man. The chief importance, I think, of 'Gitanjali' was, that it showed there was one, and one only, essential triumph for man in this worldly struggle of existence — and that was in the knowledge and mastery of self. And this self was not to be mistaken for the individual; it was in its supreme desire, the race, humanity. Around this central fact, so illuminated by that calm sense of perfection, which the secrets of nature had bestowed upon this ecstatic dreamer, all the other concerns and particulars of existence were woven like a frame around a picture — a decoration, a setting, for the infinite."

"And 'Fruit-Gathering' is, like 'Gitanjali,'" I joined in, "a book of religious poems. Its significance, however, is not quite the same. There is in the earlier collection just a hint of probationary trials; faith and devotion were accepted facts, but the soul had to rise to knowledge and a serenity of will, to an absolute attainment of spir-

ituality over the forces of the world. It reached that triumph; arrived at a familiar contemplation, won to the enactment of the Divine Will and Purpose. Now, in 'Fruit-Gathering,' the servant renders his account. And the message is valuable for the quality of the substance which is rendered. 'Now at the end of youth my life is like a fruit, having nothing to spare, and waiting to offer herself completely with her full burden of sweetness,' sings the poet. We note in the religious philosophy of Tagore, that wisdom is the prime virtue. The wisdom, not of the material West, but of the mystical East. It consists in the strength to suppress those corruptible desires which give to the flesh a command over the spirit. It is true that wisdom only becomes possible when the appetite of desire has its insatiable yearnings in the spirit. To feed it continually, with the knowledge of divine purposes, and so to grow upon its sustenance, into the nature of that inherited Godhead, which is man's original endowment. This Tagore acknowledges in Number XIV of 'Fruit-Gathering':

"My portion of the best in this world will come from your hands: such was your promise.

"Therefore your light glistens in my tears.

"I fear to be led by others lest I miss you waiting in some road corner to be my guide.

"I walk my own wilful way till my very folly tempts you to my door.

"For I have your promise that my portion of the best in this world will come from your hands.

And because of this original promise, he will make the gift not less worthy than to claim it with an account which offers a ' full burden of sweetness.' "

"But the 'fruit-gathering' is not accomplished," said Cassandra, "without a reminiscence of those probationary efforts which give a tinge of sadness to 'Gitanjali.' This collection shows the responsibility which weighs upon one who attempts to escape from those spiritual obligations that fit one to render an account. In number XXXII is expressed what reckless chance may beget:

"My king was unknown to me, therefore when he claimed his tribute I was bold to think I would hide myself leaving my debts unpaid.

"I fled and fled behind my day's work and my night's dreams.

"But his claims followed me at every breath I drew.

"Thus I came to know that I am known to him and no place left which is mine.

"Now I wish to lay my all before his feet, and gain the right to my place in his kingdom."

"What has been said makes it clear," I suggested, "that in this latest collection of Tagore's poems, there is an expression of complete self-satisfaction in man's spiritual exaltation and triumph over the world. This triumph differs from our Western conception of religious experience and fulfilment. It does so in the first place, because our faith depends so much upon revelation. The miracles we accept are those miracles which have

been witnessed. Our mysteries are impelled by conviction, and never by sensibility of substance. 'Yours is the heaven,' sings Tagore, 'that lies in the common dust, and you are there for me, you are there for all.' And this idea, beautifully embodied, is given delicate affirmation in Number LV:

"Tulsidas, the poet, was wandering, deep in thought, by the Ganges, in that lonely spot where they burn their dead.

"He found a woman sitting at the feet of the corpse of her dead husband, gaily dressed as for a wedding.

"She rose as she saw him, bowed to him, and said, 'Permit me, Master, with your blessing, to follow my husband to heaven.'

"'Why such hurry, my daughter?' asked Tulsidas. 'Is not this earth also His who made heaven?'

"'For heaven I do not long,' said the woman. 'I want my husband.'

"Tulsidas smiled and said to her, 'Go back to your home, my child. Before the month is over you will find your husband.'

"The woman went back with glad hope. Tulsidas came to her every day and gave her high thoughts to think, till her heart was filled to the brim with divine love.

"When the month was scarcely over, her neighbors came to her, asking, 'Woman, have you found your husband?'

"The widow smiled and said, 'I have.'

"Eagerly they asked, 'Where is he?'

"'In my heart is my lord, one with me,' said the woman.

"The successive books which followed 'Gitanjali,'" I continued, "brought to us, beautiful as they were, a feeling that all together they could add nothing to the wonderful message contained in the mystical visions of those song-offerings; but once again, I believe, in 'Fruit-Gathering' the poet shows us a shining pathway up which we can confidently travel to those regions of wisdom and experience, which consciously or unconsciously, we strive to reach."

"He bathes the spirit in the lustral waters of eternity," remarked Psyche.

"And the only American poet I have met with this year doing the same, is Olive Tilford Dargan," Jason added.

"Yes, yes!" I exclaimed. "We can have nothing but admiration for the achievement of this wonderful woman in 'The Cycle's Rim.' And yet, how many have discerned the quality of that poem? Professor George Herbert Palmer, with his sound and respected critical judgment, has given his warrant to this rare and beautiful utterance, and yet only a few have heeded. Still that doesn't matter. Time will discover it, as it has discovered many another masterpiece. . . . But here is a woman in our day taking the Shakespearean sonnet and making it a wonderful instrument for subtle thought and flaming imagination. The Shakespearean sonnet has been voyaging for three hundred years over the oceans of poetic minds — a craft more subtle than stately — shaped for

merchandise of costly price rather than for cargoes of necessary commodities, yet on very few occasions, sailing full-rigged and with a full tonnage of wares. The original model cleared from the deepest harbor of human imagination; touched at all the continents of human experience, unloading its inexhaustible and eternal merchandise, the costly wares of passion: the cloth o' gold of love; jewels of bitterness and pain; princely silks of friendship; rare and magical perfumes of the mind rising in triumph over emotional disaster. The model was copied in the days when the original flourished on the morning seas of English poetry; but none carried such merchandise as that ship which sailed from the harbor of Shakespeare's heart. Since, there have been brave attempts, to gather as costly a merchandise, for later copies of the famous model. The bounteous resources of life have left no lack of supplies; but few minds and hearts have been so rich in passion and imagination, as to purchase such a cargo as the story of Shakespeare's love.

"O what a lover must thou be, old Time,
With so much beauty to thy bosom folded!
The queens that reigned o'er monarchies of rhyme,
And by new worship ever newly moulded;
With all the Helens of the lyreless Troys,
Sisters of Laura, Beatrice, Eloise,
Who shone on worshippers denied the voice
To set their name 'mong song's divinities!
And happy thou, my Dear, who now dost share

The secrets of Time's eyes. O, smile thou must,
As Pity smileth, seeing mortals here
Laying another song on Helen's dust.
But of thy joy I dream unjealously,
Knowing in all thy loves thou lovest me.

"This sonnet from Mrs. Dargan's book," I continued, "indicates an approach, in the quality of substance, and instinctive surety of form, to the Shakespearean masterpiece, that, between the Elizabethan sequence and our time, it must be ranked as one of the very few supreme achievements, thrown off like planets, from that great sun. 'The Cycle's Rim' is a sequence holding the outspoken passion of love and memory, for 'One Drowned at Sea.' This love is a great essence, an essence which takes on many elements, giving to them various subtleties of associated memories with the world, and with those complications of mystery, that weave the passions of the soul, and the philosophic insight of the mind, into the web of life. You get a clarified and lucid surface, but a brooding and mysterious undercurrent; a prodigal wealth of impulses, at the bottom of the mind and heart. In the opening sonnet, how simply the poet presents her task; but note what goes into that presentation — materials of carefully chosen imagery, sound colored with the plumage of thought, and all kept in that appropriate key of controllable pain which the heart that knows wisdom, in the shape of beauty, alone can express:

"Deep lies thy body, jewel of the sea,
Locked down with wave on wave. Pearl-drift among
The coral towers, and yet not thee, not thee!
So lightly didst thou mount, blue rung o'er rung,
The lustred ladder rippling from that land
Of strangely boughed and wooing wildernesses.
Province of dream unwaning, dream yet banned
From sleepers in the sun; but thou, as presses
The lark that feels his song, sped to thy sky.
O unrepressed! If thou wouldst choose be gone,
What sea-charm then could stay thee, bid thee lie
Too deep for cock-crow earth or heaven's dawn?
Yet must I chant these broken, mortal staves,
And lay my leaf of laurel on the waves."

I stopped after that quotation, conscious that my enthusiasm had silenced any opinion my companions had wished to make.

"Oh, go on," cried Psyche, "I subscribe to all you say about Mrs. Dargan's book."

"Yes; do," echoed Cassandra.

"With my leave," added Jason, gazing into the fire with dreamy eyes. "A genius isn't to be disputed, only interpreted."

"Yes; we can afford to throw away the dross," I said, with Jason's remark in mind. "If you insist, then," I added, "let me emphasize that this 'leaf of laurel' has many wonders. Out of the dark earth comes the vital power which makes it turn its face toward the sun — knowing the fulfilment of these words in the twenty-third sonnet:

"O God, what tumult buried is, unguessed
As strife that rends a smiling-windowed house,
Within that hidden room, a woman's breast,
When agony on guard must make fair bows
To casual fortune!

But this leaf, too, has had its inexplicable wonders of the clear, warm sunlight, and from it flow into many a line those untouchable deeps of joys, those elusive flashes of beauty which cannot die:

"Here is no beauty I may look upon
And think not of thee; for all ways we went,
And every way did bud or jewel own
That for a moment made thine eyes content
And spill sweet sun to mine.

Recollection creeps in, with its glowing light again and again:

"Then out of the night
Your laughter covered me like ointment spilled;
Around me pealed your words, a torrent light,
And my sick soul rose up, virgin and healed,
On radiance walking. O, as Heaven had broke,
And dropped her little stars, you golden spoke!

If memory rises upon these peaks, other forces gather to set the soul upon the slopes, where it passes judgment upon its moods. Here in this sonnet is a deep utterance, growing to a magnificent vision in the climax:

"Sordid my life, they say, and they say true,
If the world's favor be life's only sun.
Here in the firelight where I bake and brew

None save immortals look me smiling on.
Ah, only Heaven's vagrants! If I durst
Take mine own chair an angel must get up,
And, would I drink, ere I may ease my thirst
Celestial lips make bright my cabin cup.
But no silk robes trail hither for my sake,
And for my dear, he is a lord so poor
His dreams are bare of gold. He can but take
A thread from Fate, and, leaving not his door,
If he there will, beneath a threshold vine,
Spin white eternity in one brief line.

"I quote this sonnet," I went on, "for another reason which will be apparent to the reader of this sequence. A memorial poem, with its definite tribute to one with whom life made a close union, in which spirit and circumstance colored and reflected aspects of the world, and the deeper sensibilities of character, these sonnets also by their sheer intellectual penetration, build up and around their central motive, a fabric of spiritual abstractions, of significant ideas. Destinies and fates, the 'casual fortunes,' of human experience, all those parts of obscure influences which alter perceptibly the traditions and circumstances of life, are brought into illusory relations with the purposes of this memorial chant. The conception of each individual sonnet is on an exalted plane of feeling; the singer is not satisfied merely to bring loss and grief into expression, as a too narrowly personal offering, but must needs give it the sanctity of nature's bewildered attitude of supplication, before the Unknown. This twelfth sonnet

illustrates the scale on which the poet's mind soars:

"Ah well, we know the universe we know
A sandgrain is unto the one that has
No boundary in thought, and all the show
That science makes is as a juggler's pass
Outside the circus door of wonders. Spheres
Fly animate with aim, while man doth make
His genial plaudits that awake no ears
Beyond his own; at his breath's end they break.
Truth is the planet's eye, but yet is faith
Her mighty telescope, uncovering all
The formless outworlds, till the Whisperer saith
'There lie my bower-lands; let go this ball.'
Yet in one heart we wall His globed demesne,
Nor need of windows when we've all within.

"One needs no further proof than these selections I have read," I said in conclusion, "that here is an authentic achievement. No mood could ring truer than this mood of deep-felt grief. Its expression could not be more genuinely wrought with the fine subtlety of speech and image. In everything these sonnets are of the twentieth century; they are the products of a modern temperament, and yet possess every old distinction of poetic beauty. The wistfulness of clinging to lost possessions is a wistfulness that has turned in these sonnets from uncertainty to strength, to an element that has turned from a lure to a force,—bright, dignified, and graceful. If the memorial is one of amazing distinction, the art in which it is clothed is of that beauty which comes nigh to perfection."

XVII

PATRINS

It was our last September meeting, and once again Nature gave us a fine day. The storm of the previous week had accomplished that transformation which a severe storm in September always does; summer and all its signs were gone; that mellow substance in the sunlight was taking on a greyish hue, stiffened by the sharper winds, having a melancholy undertone; the trees were not all denuded, but the leaves which still hung pathetically to the boughs were sere, and it took but a touch to make them crumble; the long grass in the fields was breaking on sapless blades, and in every direction throughout the countryside the farms lay motionless of human labor among growing things. Yet the day was fine in spite of the change so noticeable in the aspect of nature, and we walked on to our grove with that spacious feeling which out of doors must always give to one who appreciates the bounteous openness of the sky and the spreading floor of the earth beneath it.

We were a little impressed at the appearance of the grove. Two weeks had passed since we were last there, and its spirit as well as its appearance had changed. I think it was the open branches

above that made the most difference; it made the place seem less intimate. The dry, warm, fragrant atmosphere of sunnier days was gone, and we felt the faint penetration of dampness which seemed unsympathetic to our presence. We had brought extra garments with us to spread on the ground, and so were soon comfortably seated for our talk.

"I have sometimes wondered," began Jason, "if the patrins of the gypsies were not a good symbol of man's experience in following the trail which leads him to his spiritual goal in life. I don't know why I get the notion into my head, but poets like John G. Neihardt, Donald Evans, and William H. Davies give me the impression that they have been following the guide of spiritual patrins."

"Davies, who was a tramp when Bernard Shaw discovered him," said Psyche, "does give one the sense of spiritual wanderlust. His simplicity, sensitiveness, fresh and vivid instincts, have all the quality of open-air nourishment and growth. People who live in the open have an infectious emotionalism — people, I should say, with irregular ways of life, like tramps and gypsies, and who are irresponsible in all relationships except to weather and shelter. For instance, what a confession we get of the irresponsibility of such a life from Davies' poem, 'In the Country':

"This life is sweetest; in this wood
I hear no children cry for food;

I see no woman, white with care;
No man, with muscles wasting here.

"No doubt it is a selfish thing
To fly from human suffering;
No doubt he is a selfish man,
Who shuns poor creatures sad and wan.

"But 'tis a wretched life to face
Hunger in almost every place;
Cursed with a hand that's empty, when
The heart is full to help all men.

"Can I admire the statue great,
When living men starve at its feet!
Can I admire the park's green tree,
A roof for homeless misery!

"When I can see few men in need,
I then have power to help by deed,
Nor lose my cheerfulness in pity —
Which I must do in every city.

"For when I am in those great places,
I see ten thousand suffering faces;
Before me stares a wolfish eye,
Behind me creeps a groan or sigh."

"I think you are right, Psyche," I said. "And it takes a poet with that perception to see man against the background of eternity. Davies has done it in a poem called 'Man,'" which I read:

"I saw Time running by —
Stop, Thief, was all the cry.
I heard a voice say, Peace!

Let this vain clamour cease.
Can ye bring lightning back
That leaves upon its track
Men, horses, oak trees dead?
Canst bring back Time? it said.
There's nothing in Man's mind
Can catch Time up behind;
In front of that fast Thief
There's no one — end this grief.
Tut, what is Man? How frail!
A grain, a little nail,
The wind, a change of cloth —
A fly can give him death.
Some fishes in the sea
Are born to outlive thee,
And owls, and toads, and trees —
And is Man more than these?
I see Man's face in all
Things, be they great or small;
I see the face of him
In things that fly or swim;
One fate for all, I see —
Whatever that may be.
Imagination fits
Life to a day; though its
Length were a thousand years,
'Twould not decrease our fears;
What strikes men cold and dumb
Is that Death's time *must* come."

"The finest quality, in my opinion," said Jason, "of these open-air folk is the angelic tenderness that exists beneath their rough exterior. Davies' 'Catharine' is as tender as anything in Shakespeare or Tennyson." And he read:

"We children every morn would wait
For Catharine, at the garden gate;
Behind school-time, her sunny hair
Would melt the master's frown of care,
What time his hand but threatened pain,
Shaking aloft his awful cane;
So here one summer's morn we wait
For Catharine at the garden gate.
To Dave I say —'There's sure to be
Some coral isle unknown at sea,
And — if I see it first —'tis mine!
But I'll give it to Catharine.'
'When she grows up,' says Dave to me,
'Some ruler in a far countree,
Where every voice but his is dumb,
Owner of pearls, and gold, and gum,
Will build for her a shining throne,
Higher than his, and near his own;
And he, who would not list before,
Will listen to Catharine, and adore
Her face and form; and,' Dave went on —
When came a man there pale and wan,
Whose face was dark and wet though kind,
He, coming there, seemed like a wind
Whose breath is rain, yet will not stop
To give the parchèd flowers a drop:
'Go, children, to your school,' he said
'And tell the master Catharine's dead.'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Psyche, catching her breath. "How do they get it from the wind and the weather, the long dusty roads, and the shadowy places behind the hedgerows!"

"Davies is a genius; there's no doubt of that," I said. "And true Elizabethan, too. If you

should ever doubt it, listen to this, 'The Two Children':

"'Ah, little boy! I see
You have a wooden spade.
Into this sand you dig
So deep — for what?' I said.
'There's more rich gold,' said he,
'Down under where I stand,
Than twenty elephants
Could move across the land.'

"'Ah, little girl with wool! —
What are you making now?'
'Some stockings for a bird,
To keep his legs from snow.'
And there those children are,
So happy, small, and proud:
The boy that digs his grave,
The girl that knits her shroud.

"Well, poetry becomes at times just sheer — poetry, like wind or sunlight; the lyrics of the Elizabethan song-books, of Herrick, of Campion, blossoming dreams of the spirit. Davies is of that company — simple, direct, poignant," I said.

"And Mr. Neihardt in advancing from 'A Bundle of Myrrh' through 'The Stranger at the Gate,' to 'The Poet's Town,' has also followed the trail of the spiritual patrins," Cassandra believed. "This volume, 'The Quest,' gathering in a single collection all the important work before that splendid narrative, 'The Song of Hugh Glass,' shows what an advance Mr. Neihardt has

made from the vague spiritual impulse in the sensuous themes of 'A Bundle of Myrrh.' The blaze of passion in that earlier volume consumed whatever spiritual substance the poet evoked. The best thing there is, 'Let Down Your Hair,' I will read it and you can judge for yourself what emotions it is mostly likely to stir —"

"No woman can read that poem properly," interrupted Jason. "It wasn't meant for her to read." And without further parley he began himself to read:

"Unbind your hair, and let its masses be
Soft midnight on the weary eyes of me.
I faint before the dazzle of your breast;
Make shadow with your hair that I may rest,
And I will cool my fevered temples there:
Let down your hair.

"Ah — so! It falls like night upon a day
Too bright for peace. It is a cruel way
That leads to this, alas, which is but pain.
I am athirst — your tresses fall like rain;
Ah, wrap me close and bind me captive there
Amid your hair!

"How much my soul has given that my flesh
Might lie a thrall in this enchanted mesh!
Something I grope for that I used to hold;
Something it was bought dearly — cheaply sold;
Something divine was strangled unaware
Here in your hair!

"But no — I will not grieve — will not complain.
Let your hair fall upon me like night rain

And shut me from myself, and make me blind!
How can I deem this bondage aught but kind?
And yet — I cannot sleep for some dumb care
Here in your hair."

"I won't say that spirituality cannot be gotten out of such a subject," I said, "but it isn't in this particular poem. Nor will I deny its beauty; it has that of the purely physical kind. I wonder, after all, if it isn't because it really does lack passion? Not many poets can combine the two, passion and spirituality, as Ernest Dowson did in 'Cynara.'"

"But you don't deny spiritual force and beauty in Mr. Neihardt's poems, do you?" asked Psyche.

"Of course not," I answered her. "Here is a poem called 'The Story,' from 'The Stranger at the Gate,' exquisitely shimmering with it." And I read:

"Yearly thrilled the plum tree
With the mother-mood;
Every June the rose stock
Bore her wonder-child:
Every year the wheatlands
Reared a golden brood:
World of praying Rachels,
Heard and reconciled.

"'Poet,' said the plum tree's
Singing white and green,
'Wheat avails your mooning,
Can you fashion plums?'
'Dreamer,' crooned the wheatland's

Rippling vocal sheen,
'See my golden children
Marching as with drums!'

"'By a god begotten,'
Hymned the sunning vine,
'In my lyric children
Purple music flows!'
'Singer,' breathed the rose bush,
'Are they not divine?
Have you any daughters
Mighty as a rose?'

"*Happy, happy mothers!*
Cruel, cruel words!
Mine are ghostly children,
Haunting all the ways;
Latent in the plum bloom,
Calling through the birds,
Romping with the wheat brood
In their shadow plays!

"*Gotten out of star-glint,*
Mothered of the Moon;
Nurtured with the rose scent,
Wild, elusive throng!
Something of the vine's dream
Crept into a tune;
Something of the wheat-drone
Echoed in a song.

"Once again the white fires
Smoked among the plums;
Once again the world-joy
Burst the crimson bud;

Golden bannered wheat broods
Marched to fairy drums;
Once again the vineyard
Felt the Bacchic blood.

" ' Lo, he comes — the dreamer —'
Crooned the whitened boughs,
' Quick with vernal love-fires —
Oh, at last he knows!
See the bursting plum bloom
There above his brows!'
' Boaster!' breathed the rose bush,
' 'Tis a budding rose!'

" Droned the glinting acres,
' In his soul, mayhap,
Something like a wheat-dream
Quickens into shape!'
Sang the sunning vineyard,
' Lo, the lyric sap
Sets his heart a-throbbing
Like a purple grape!'

" *Mother of the wheatlands,*
Mother of the plums,
Mother of the vineyard —
All that loves and grows —
Such a living glory
To the dreamer comes,
Mystic as a wheat-song,
Mighty as a rose!

" *Star-glint, moon-glow,*
Gathered in a mesh!
Spring-hope, white fire

By a kiss beguiled!
Something of the world-joy
Dreaming into flesh!
Bird-song, vine-thrill
Quickened to a child!"

XVIII

IN GLORIA MUNDI

As the end of our meetings in the woods grew near we were more reluctant than ever to give them up. Psyche and Cassandra, with their mother, were staying on at The Farm until after Christmas, and they were not decided whether the winter was to be spent in Boston or Manchester. More and more I could ill spare the time which took me away from town; and Jason kept a discreet cloak about the future. Yet, as I said, we all felt reluctant in leaving the place which had so many pleasant memories of companionship and poetic discussion. The consciousness of the change so soon to take place made us fall into our talk with a directness that was almost formal.

"There is an affinity between these two poets, Mr. Aiken and Mr. Wallis," Jason began it, "that is strikingly interesting. It is neither in subject nor treatment, but in the way they look at life. And I think in both cases it is a deliberate adventure on their part."

"I confess they both appal me," remarked Psyche.

"I shivered when I read both volumes," Cassandra informed us. "And I think it was less because of the things these poets write about, than

the fact that they might be true. William Windune and Forslin are types to upset one's faith in the sobriety of humanity."

"No, Cassandra," I said. "They shouldn't upset our faith in the soundness of humanity, but rather increase the faith we have in what we know to be good."

"The testament of Windune," remarked Jason, "merely prescribes a philosophy of life; Forslin's adventures fill the prescription."

"What do you think of Mr. Wallis' poem?" asked Psyche.

"Well, as a poet first," I answered, "I think he is one who disregards the tendencies of his time, borrows the method and attitude of an old but famous French poet, uses them with the same gusto and frankness, and produces a fine and vivid achievement. It seems almost gratuitous to quote this explanatory sub-title that 'The Testament of William Windune' is a 'Poem in which Windune disposeth of his worldly Goods, and maketh Mention and Disposition of divers other Matters, all this being modelled after The Greater Testament of François Villon.'

"Now will I for a moment tell
Of him, my prototype, who knew
This transitory world so well.
His ancient verse to me and you
Is just as vital and as new
As any of the present time.
Would we had one like him to do
Some rough, hard work for modern rime!

This stanza concludes the ballade in which Windune tells of his purpose, and of the tribute he pays to his master, Villon. The final line is what attracts our attention at this moment, for the poet himself bids in this volume to supply the need for 'Some rough, hard work for modern rime!' In the fifth, sixth and seventh ballades we receive a statement of the poet's philosophy. It is a preliminary to be thoroughly understood before the reader can follow with sympathetic appreciation the legacy of Windune's spiritual and material possessions. The 'rough, hard work for modern rime,' consists no more in the truth that Windune proposes to tell than in the convictions he holds that the very purposes of life are obscure. By this one must not conclude that there is either a lack of vision or of emotional stimulus in this man."

"After all isn't it a profoundly serious matter, this one of questioning life, its contradictions, and eternal wonders?" asked Jason. "But there is an intensity of desire to know, to delve so deep into the mysteries, that the mind brings up from the sea of implications and inscrutable signs, the pearls of glowing pessimism. Mr. Wallis is not exactly a pessimist; but the word comes nearest to expressing that mood which dwells upon aspects of negation. There is a continually witnessing of dissolution in the world; of youth hungrily snatching up the crumbs of joy and desire before age with its darkness and deadened nerves overtakes the flesh and spirit. Death is almost tri-

umphantly chanting because it is like a fire cleansing all the dross of the world. Among the small group of miscellaneous poems which follow the 'Testament,' there is one called 'Wind Overhead,' from which I quote this stanza to show how sombrely this substance has taken hold of the poet's imagination:

"We belong to that pitiful sect
That is subject to chance's wild caprice,
To the ravage of years and the plot of disease.
We are creation's most select,
"The acme or the apogee
Of Nature's infinite brotherhood;
Ours is the knowledge of evil and good,
Since Eve did eat of that mystical tree!
(And the fruit was death in that orchard-wood.)

But it has not impressed itself without first cutting the die of consciousness with some primary beliefs. We go back to those three ballades I have mentioned, two of which deal with the 'Matter of Great Erudition,' and the other with 'Reality.' From these let me quote. The 'Matter of Erudition' is an important factor in determining the results to be reached about life. The argument of Windune reaches this speculation:

"What is the use of all this life?
Time toys with senseless force and dust,
Transmutes them into man and wife
Or into hate or love or lust.
Each, as it is predestined, must

Begin and flourish, lastly fall,
So that we can but question, just
What is the goal or good of all?

" Time toys with senseless force and dust
And by his wondrous wand transmutes
The same to baker's dough or crust
Or lovely girls in linen suits,
To chauffeurs who elude pursuits,
To millionaires and motormen,
To waving grains or luscious fruits —
Then whirls it all to dust again.

" There must be some delusion here.
Our lives, if finite, cannot be
If there exists, as would appear,
A temporal infinity.*
And yet, none could convince us we
Are non-existent. Hence a press
Of studies in philosophy
Arise, in number numberless.

Now in the ballade on 'Reality' the search is made for truth from a different angle. Here an ironic possibility is bruited, which may alter the entire significance of that 'temporal infinity' so deluding in its appearance. The suspended question in this stanza admits of no miracle, but leads to a decided responsibility on the part of nature for still further concessions to the intelligence of matter:

* By mathematical calculation seventy, a life's span, is no part of infinity, or seventy divided by infinity equals nothing ($^{70}/_{00} = 0$).

"The Roman ladies sat and spun
And gossiped in the knowing way
That gentle dames have always done,
And sewing circles do to-day.
But they by time were swept away
Where none can hear them more or see;
And we shall last no more than they —
What is the true reality?

"Through five informants we have one
Coördinate report; we say
Our minds have gained dominion
Of suns and planets, air and clay.
But changed is all as night from day
To one with senses four or three.
Who knows what six might not display —
What is the true reality?

"A ship of many a thousand ton
When sighted is a speck of gray;
Each star, although a flaming sun,
Seems but a dot of luminous ray,
Less than a puny seed of hay
Held overclosely to the eye.
What standard is there to portray
What is the true reality?

L'Envoi

"Professors, can time make and slay
An entity, can senses be,
With space, delusion? Tell me, pray,
What is the true reality?

"It is a little disconcerting, however," I said, "to have the poet, after giving us a glimpse into

the vista of this mystic possibility of the sixth sense, to fall back upon the flat, negative assumption of this stanza in the second ballade on the 'Matter of Great Erudition':

"The world is full of wonders, all
And each is wonderful to me.
In kitchen-vessels on the wall,
Hanging on hook or nail, I see
Types of materiality,
Reminders man and metals fall
In the same class with bird and bee,
As crumbling and ephemeral.

And to gather all his substance into this thickening gloom of doubt that has a faint candle gleam wavering and eluding our guidance in the dark:

"We have but faith, we cannot know,
For all we know would point our doom,
What we can grasp would go to show
The fearful meaning of the tomb.
One race that fills another's room
Is all our minds can help us see,
And faith in all that lights the gloom
That overhangs our destiny.

"With this ballade Windune ends his speculation and takes up the 'legatees of high import.' They are, as he says, of 'varied sort.' He bequeaths his body to the earth, to his Alma Mater, 'Mother Yale,' stern honor and a stainless name; to his own mother 'griefs above each interested assignee,' to his native town the honor of his birth; to a bereaved father mourning the death of his

son, a rondel of sorrow; to magnates a 'coin to typify their graft,' and finally in an explanatory ballade he would have his 'verse, his Tests, and his Aims,' win 'a very modest place amid the poets' gatherings.' There are ballades touching incidentally upon other subjects, the entire poem producing an original and effective testament of life.

"The small group of miscellaneous poems included," I continued, "have that same exceptional quality of thought that characterizes the 'Testament.' The verse is modelled on severe lines with a grave music. 'Wind Overhead,' 'Impartial,' 'A Ballad of John Davidson,' 'Winter,' and the 'Ode of Gæa,' are touched with visionary substances that come to a surface of sombre and searching moods. In the poem called 'A Summer Day,' there is something with all that terrific force which Lionel Johnson put into a poem he named 'Victory,' only in this instance Mr. Wallis has given us the reverse of that experience:

"Somehow it seemed the open air
Might cleanse her of her first disgrace,
And so she found a sunny place
And stretched herself in silence there.

"Her body she had loved to touch
And tend and gaze on and control,
And even her inmost private soul
Felt soiled with an enduring smutch.

"Although there had seemed nothing true
But passion when she yielded, yet

She shut her eyes to help forget
And — lest the sun might stare her through.

" Then, with a little moan of pain,
She turned upon her side and saw
The hot, grey clouds that strove to draw
Rare moisture for the blessed rain.

" She felt the burnt grass with her palm
And thought that it was blasted too,
And yearned for rain or healing dew
As she for death or changeless calm.

" The very air seemed choked with shame,
In the high trees no frail leaf stirred,
Only a little scarlet bird
Shot through the air, a shaft of flame.

" Hearing at length a whistle shrill,
She loosed her clenched hands from the dirt
And wearily arranged her skirt
As he came slouching up the hill.

" Mr. Wallis was class poet at Yale. He has struck in this volume a note, envisaged a substance, so finely shaped and tuned to the scrupulous orderliness of thought and form, that its importance will be seriously acknowledged by the truly discriminating students of contemporary poetry."

" And ' The Jig of Forslin,' " Psyche prodded us on, " what do you both make of that weird, nauseous jumble of adventures? "

" Well, I've asked myself," I began, taking ad-

vantage of Jason's silence, " has Conrad Aiken written, in this poem, a masterpiece, or merely befuddled an idea with dexterous twists of rhythms laden with the most melancholy and sordid stuff of dreams? Through the first two parts of this narrative this question kept intruding upon my reading. Then my emotions and my thoughts began to rise on something for all its dark phantasmagorias, up, up on the wings of beauty, striking a level flight until with the poem I seemed to vanish off into regions having neither time nor space, becoming lost in a kind of void. There is no way to come back by the route of Mr. Aiken's poem. You begin it as one caught in an irresistible current that runs through other currents and all gravitating towards an unknown centre; divagations become confusing, until suddenly the emotions take a lurch and as suddenly settle on an even keel the prow of thought smothered in a foam of dreams sailing magnificently through a sea of 'vicarious experience.' This vicarious experience is really supposed to begin immediately one gets through Forslin's prologue; the 'jig' gets into action, as it were, as soon as these lines are recorded,

" Was I that man? How should I know?
Yet, when I die, that man will die with me.
Deep music now, with lap and flow,
Green music streaked with gleams and bubbles of light,
Bears me softly away. Come down with me! . . .
We will live strange lives before this night —

which ends the prologue, but through the first and second parts it is all blind following until the reader gets his gait.

" The poet has struck his gait only in the sense that he has prepared his laboratory, got his instruments and his subject in the experimental stage. He works upon his problem before the reader gets a clue to his intentions. The reader can turn to the poet's preface for a clue if he desires, and I recommend that he have such a desire and fulfils it; for in spite of my objections to introductions to books of poetry, in this case it is appropriate and instructive. A passage from the preface I extract here so as to give insight into this strange, and sometimes beautiful and sometimes overpowering narrative: ' Complications arise from the fact that " The Jig of Forslin " is somewhat new, both in method and in structure. It does not conveniently fit in any category, and is therefore liable, like all such works, to be condemned for not being something it was never intended to be. The critics who like to say " this man is a realist," or " this man is a romanticist," or in some such way to tag an author once and for all, will here find it difficult. For my intention has been to employ all methods, attitudes, slants, each in its proper place, as a necessary and vital part of any such study as this. Consequently, it is possible to pick out portions of this poem to exemplify almost any poetic method or tone. This eclecticism, or passage from one part to another of the poetic gamut, has not been at random

or for the sake of a mere *tour de force;* it has been guided entirely by the central theme. This theme is the process of vicarious wish fulfilment by which civilized man enriches his circumscribed life and obtains emotional balance. It is an exploration of his emotional and mental hinterland, his fairy-land of impossible illusions and dreams; ranging, on the one extreme, from the desire for a complete tyranny of body over mind, to the desire, on the other extreme, for a complete tyranny of mind over body; by successive natural steps . . . in either direction.'

" The central theme," I kept on, " is based upon the Freudian psychology, and ' The Jig of Forslin ' is ' one man's adventure in other men's lives.' ' On the psychological side,' remarks the poet, ' it is obvious enough that the range of vicarious experience, here of necessity only hinted at, or symbolized by certain concrete and selected pictures, is suggested on a completer and more comprehensive plan than will be found in any specific individual: a good many types have been welded, to give the widest possible range. Forslin is not a man, but man. Consequently, opposite types of experience are here often found side by side, and it would be obviously false to force a connection.'

" Forslin as the hero of these vicarious adventures is an abstraction; but the adventures are as concrete as a sneezing neighbor, and in that psychology is as demonstrable as the laboratory method of any scientist. Mr. Aiken calls his poem

a symphony, and affirms it by the recurrence of theme, but in every other respect it has no symphonic structure; that theme is the Freudian psychology," and I read:

" Once I loved; and once I died; and once
I murdered my lover, my lover who had betrayed
me.
Once I stepped from the threshold, and saw my body
Huddled in purple snow.
Once I escaped my flesh and rose on starlight.
The theme returns . . . We bow our hearts and go.

Again,

" Silent as thought in evening contemplation
Weaves the bat under the gathering stars.
Silent as dew we seek new incarnation,
Mediate new avatars.

Again,

" You smoke with me: you do not think
That I have stood by Jordan's brink:
You talk with me, and do not guess
That I have power to curse or bless. . . .
You think you know me, know my name,
Can tell me where and whence I came —
Is knowing to be so simple, then?
And am I one, or a million men?

Again,

" Tired of change, I seek the unmoving centre —
But is it moveless — or are all things turning?
Great wheels revolve. I fall among them and die.

My veins are streets. Millions of men rush through
them.
Which, in this terrible multitude, is I?
I hurry to him, I plunge through jostling darkness,
I think I see his face —
He's gone. And a sinister stranger leers at me.
Countless eyes of strangers are turned toward me.
Who's this that all our eyes are turned to see?

And in the epilogue, the poet shoots the conviction in a rhythmic comet vanishing in magnificence through the illimitable corridors of dream:

" Time. . . . Time. . . . Time. . . .
And through the immortal silence we may hear
The choral stars like great clocks tick and chime.
Destiny, with inquisitorial eye,
Regards the jewelled movement of the sky.
And there alone, in a little lamplit room,
Immortal, changeless, in a changeless dream,
Forslin sits and meditates; and hears
The hurrying days go down to join the years. . . .

" The music weaves about him, gold and silver;
The music chatters, the music sings,
The music sinks and dies.
Who dies, who lives? What leaves remain forever?
Who knows the secret of the immortal springs?
Who laughs, who kills, who cries?

" We hold them all, they walk our dreams forever,
Nothing perishes in that haunted air,
Nothing but is immortal there.
And we ourselves, dying with all our worlds,
Will only pass the ghostly portal

Into another's dream; and so live on
Through dream to dream, immortal."

"There are a lot of echoes in Mr. Aiken's poem," asserted Jason. "'What leaves remain forever?' is an echo of Swinburne's 'No life tires forever' from 'The Garden of Proserpine.'"

"That's the essence of the theme. The fulfilment as given in this narrative I have not touched, nor can I touch upon it with adequate explanation. The main thing is to try to understand what 'The Jig of Forslin' means; to enjoy that meaning is for every individual reader to test himself. The test must be individual. The many dream-lives that Forslin lives will upset many a calculation; but only let me urge, where that calculation proceeds from an unperceptive emotionalism. Forslin is really the autobiography of humanity, an autobiography indited with the apparent carelessness and disconnection of the record Mark Twain left us of his life. We can say of him as Edwin Arlington Robinson said of Flammonde in his poem of that name, 'What was he and what was he not?' Murderer of many kinds and degrees, juggler, lover of mermaids and lamias. Peter the Apostle before Golgotha — all these was that man who sat in the lamplit room meditating himself into other lives, times and climes, escaping self and environment, which is, as Mr. Aiken wisely makes the embodiment of his poem, the strongest wish in man. It is the desire to drown self in a different experience, no matter

what the mode, as the vicariousness of Forslin's adventures show. So,

"Let us drown, then, if to drown is but to change:
Drown in the days of those whose days are strange;
Close our eyes, and drown;
Wearily, without effort, at our leisure,
In some strange sea-pool, lit with sun and treasure,
Sink slowly down
From the bright waves above our phantom hands
To vales of twilight sands. . . .

"Grown weary of ourselves, these tedious hours,
Our voices, our eternal pulses drumming,
Our doubts, our hesitations, our regrets,
And the shrinking self that sits within and cowers . . .
Let us descend in some strange sea-pool;
Creep through the caves to hear the great tide coming;
Forget our souls that murmur of unpaid debts.

"Whether you like the poem or not, touching as it does upon sordid and ghastly episodes, you cannot deny that it strikes an original note. Even this would hardly make it stand out if the forms employed did not so adequately carry out the intention. As I said, the first two parts, units as they are, will tend to confuse the reader; they are like the opening chapters of many a famous novel, a little difficult to focus the interest, have the effect of tuning up. But in spite of this, the poem as a whole is unlike anything else. The sensibilities will be offended, the coarseness of the

picaresque novel is introduced, and yet there are sections of mystical beauty and lyrical intensity. As a poet Mr. Aiken gains immeasurably with this poem," I finished.

XIX

APOLOGIA

Jason was in high glee when he came down to The Farm for our final discussion of the year. He carried a little blue covered magazine published at Cornhill, in Boston, a magazine called *The Poetry Journal*, which my good friend, Mr. Edmund Brown, publishes and edits, and of which I have pleasant memories. "Come on," Jason shouted, as soon as he reached us, waiting for him on the porch, "this is the day of the Inquisition"— and opening the pages of the little magazine as he stood on the steps, read with a flourish, "'There is nothing else to do but to let the Inquisition take its course, to launch the brief of excommunication, and to deliver the culprit over to the secular arm to be burnt.' Come on," he shouted again. "And I'm going to be the executioner."

"In spite of the four infinitives crowding each other in so short a sentence," I remarked, "I am ready, though I don't quite understand the source of your hilarity. Come on," I in turn exhorted Psyche and Cassandra, "let's have this over, whatever it is."

It was a fine late October day. The air was biting, but we were warmly protected against it,

enjoying our bracing walk to the woods. The woods, also, were almost bare and desolate, but they had no effect upon the ardor of this our last visit. We soon reached our grove, and warmly wrapped, seated ourselves upon some fallen logs, which Jason and I had dragged together to protect us from the damp ground.

"Now, Jason," I said, "tell us what it is all about."

"Well, you know," he answered, "you insisted that our final gathering should be a discussion of the new 'Anthology.'"

"Yes," I replied; "I wanted your frank opinion of the work."

"Just before I came up," continued Jason, "my copy of *The Poetry Journal* arrived, and I found a review of the book in it by John Gould Fletcher. The attack by Mr. Aiken, begun last year in its pages, is continued this year by Mr. Fletcher. He says: 'Mr. Braithwaite thinks that the present war will produce another epoch-making group of American writers to correspond to Cooper and Irving, whom he calls products of the *Civil War*. Let me inform the indulgent reader that Cooper was born in 1789, when the American Revolution was finished and the French Revolution begun, and that his first novel dates from 1821. Pursuing these researches in the flowery bye-paths of history, we likewise ascertain that Irving was born in the year that peace was made, in 1793, and that he spent most of his life in England. As for Longfellow

and Emerson, we know of the former that he was born in 1806 and practically completed his life work with "Tales of a Wayside Inn" in 1863, while the latter came three years earlier, and had published his "Essays," "Poems," "English Traits," and "Representative Men," before 1860. So when Mr. Braithwaite says that "the fermentation of national affairs has always antedated the spiritual flowering," he is making a statement easily disprovable. What great American work was produced after the Civil War? And why did the first outburst of the New Poetry — as he himself admits — come in 1912?'"

"Don't you mind what Mr. Fletcher says," spoke up Psyche and Cassandra sympathetically, "and surely he is not so bad an historian as to place Cooper and Irving with the Civil War; it must be a printer's mistake, and so must be his saying that Irving was born in 1793 instead of 1783."

I laughed. "That introduction has been much misunderstood," I commented. "Mr. Fletcher's criticism proves that all most people can see are facts and figures. Things they can see with the eye and touch with the hands. August, 1914, is a momentous date, but the preparation for that date, which goes back for a generation, they are blind to. The date is only a symbol,— the symbol of spiritual or material cycles in which we move. I still maintain,— and it makes little difference whether the writer or the group of writers, preceded or followed the calendar dates when

wars were declared and ended, that the essence of physical conflict in the minds of men, which is a national fermentation, antedates creative flowering. You can't disprove a spiritual influence by material figures of day, month and year. Not only does this corollary of creative spirit and destructive force exist, bound within the circle of a period, but you will find as a proof of my contention, in its general aspect, that the authors of the two previous literary epochs in American letters were preoccupied with themes, in substance and subject, drawn from the causes and deeds of Revolutionary and Civil War history. I am afraid what we need in American criticism is a little more spiritual imagination."

"That is a good introduction to Mr. Fletcher's next most important point of censure," said Jason. "He says, 'Now just as the strength of a chain is in its weakest link, so the strength of an artist or critic can only be tested by examining his weakness. The fine quality of any work is beyond the reach of blame or praise. We only measure the defects, the gaps, the voids, and estimate their effect. This is especially true with regard to criticism. The critic can only be judged by his lapses from a certain high standard.' The fallacy of the statement is on the very surface," I replied. "What Mr. Fletcher says in effect is, that a critic should have no 'lapses from a certain high standard.' I wonder if he could point out a critic in the whole range of literature who has never had a lapse? The greatest

critical work in English literature is Coleridge's 'Biographia Literari,' and so we must judge that work, full of lapses, from that point of view. Arthur Symons, I remember, wrote that it was 'one of the most annoying books in any language. The thought of Coleridge has to be pursued across stones, ditches, and morasses; with haste, lingering, and disappointment; it turns back, loses itself, fetches wide circuits, and comes back to no visible end. But you must follow it step by step and, if you are ceaselessly attentive, will be ceaselessly rewarded.' Let me quote, while I am at it," I said, "another paragraph of Symons graven on the tablets of my memory, which is very much needed in American literature to-day. It is the ideal of what criticism should be. He says, that 'Criticism, when it is not mere talk about literature, concerns itself with the first principles of human nature and with fundamental ideas. There is a quite valuable kind of critic to whom a book is merely a book, who is interested in things as they become words, in emotions only as they add fine raptures to printed pages. To such critics we owe rules and systems; when they tabulate or elucidate metre or any principle of form, they are doing a humble but useful service to artists. Their comments on books are often pleasant reading, sometimes turning into a kind of literature, essays, which we are content to read for their own charm. But there is hardly anything idler than literary criticism which is a mere describing and comparing of books, a mere praise

and blame of this and that writer and his work. When Coleridge writes a criticism of Shakespeare, he is giving us his deepest philosophy, in a manner in which we can best apprehend it. Criticism with Goethe is part of his view of the world, his judgment of human nature, and of society. With Pater, criticism is quickened meditation; with Matthew Arnold, a form of moral instruction or mental satire. Lamb said in his criticism more of what he had to say of "what God and man is," with more gravity and more intensity, than in any other part of his work.' "

"How ridiculous, after such a standard, Mr. Fletcher looks with his, 'Now just as the strength of a chain is in its weakest link, so the strength of an artist or critic can only be tested by examing his weakness,' " commented Psyche.

"Well, the difference is," I said, "that Arthur Symons is a creative critic, and only a creative critic reasons deeply and consistently."

"I'll pass by," said Jason, "the isolated lines and stanzas which Mr. Fletcher quotes, to prove what bad poetry the 'Anthology' contains. He says: 'I have given samples above . . . prefaced with the sententious platitude: "To appreciate poetry one must be able to recognize the immortal virtues that give to art its significance." ' I always suspected," Jason threw at me, "that you were given to 'sententious platitudes.' "

"Well, I will at least stick to that one," I replied. "I wonder if Mr. Fletcher understood what I meant? His interpretation was in blindly

and narrowly applying the phrase 'to recognize the immortal virtues,' to form — the form of poetry. It was not at all what I meant. You must recognize and understand, as Arthur Symons said, the substances of life. This is as necessary to the critic as to the poet. The 'immortal virtues' of life are the deep and eternal instincts."

"All the same there is a lot of rubbish in the 'Anthology,'" Jason veered off from Mr. Fletcher's criticism.

"That's as you look at it," I responded. "Perhaps as much you or any other editor might put into such a book. Now, if you want to hear a bit of sensible criticism which I can respect," I added, "let me read this poem 'On Reading the Braithwaite Anthology for 1916,' which appeared in the correspondence department of Miss Monroe's 'Poetry: A Magazine of Verse,' written by Mr. Willard Wattles. I am sure you must have seen it." And I read:

"All the poets have been stripping,
Quaintly into moonbeams slipping,
Running out like wild Bacchantes
Minus *lingerie* and panties,
Never knew of such a frantic
Belviderean, Corbyantic,
Highty-tighty, Aphrodite,
Stepping out without a nightie.

"Edward started with his tragic
Pan-Hellenic pantless '*Magic*'

(Page 14); and quite as bare
Mrs. Jean Starr . . .
In a mood as unsartorial
Leaves her '*Clothes*' as a memorial,
Like Carlyle at Craigenputtock
Dancing out to show her courage
(At 34, one has to sneeze,
For where, oh where is her chemise?)

And then, leaping like a roe-buck
Comes athletic Victor Starbuck
In among the water-lilies
Dipping like a young Achilles,
Then across the woods he scrambles
(Woods are never full of brambles)
And in raiment of Apollo
Sits all night in a damp hollow
Like another drenched Ulysses
Scaring the Phæaecian missis
Till progressive Nausicaä
Led him home to her deah fathah . . .
All the frogs were frightened green
(You'll find it all on 114).

"What with running and with racing,
All the moonbeams worth the chasing
Some of silver and some not,
What a night had Mora Scott!
Out of stars to leave behind
Ugolino on the wind,
Finding, spite of hell's alarms
Firm lips, and Paola's arms.

She and young James ought to run
(*'Out o' the Stars,'* page 31)

Ruddy-cheeked and laughing-hearted
Till the last wild faun is started
And the white nymphs flee to cover
From their shaggy, laughing lover,
In that Red Month when the musky
Heavy grapes are amber-dusky
Shot with ruby through and through —
(Oppenheim on 22).

" These are only half the glories
Of these white Terpsichores
Who have fled their clothes to antic
Tunefully and *so* Bacchantic;
Even staid New England aunties
Go to call without their mantles,
And the price of stays and laces
Has gone down, they say, at Macy's.
Reckless earth-born Odell Shepard
Goes without his daily leopard
On page 30 —(it's not bad,
But certainly Odell *is* unclad).

" I've a niece named Elinore,
Just a baby, barely four;
And her parents, feeling pally,
Took her to the Russian Ballet
Where in baby mood, ecstatic
She approved them, acrobatic,
From ' *Le Midi d'un Faune* '
To that white and wondrous ' *Swan,*'
Cleopatra's eyes of jade
To that mad Scheherazade.

" Then one morning my good sister
Pausing at her housework, missed her;

Elinore of yellow hair
Did not answer anywhere.
Down before the house she found her,
With admiring babies round her,
Clad in one small shoe and stocking
On her tiny bare toes rocking,
Pirouetting so sedately,
Chubby, funny, staid, and stately,
Gravely tripping the fandango
Or some Lilliputian tango,—
All her baby body given
A white daisy unto Heaven.
When her mother stooped to fold her
In her arms, she could not scold her
(Though by this time all the neighbors
Had resigned their morning labors).

"For my sister knew the answer
For this naked little dancer
Who had shocked the postman slightly
Pacing up the street so tritely,
Leaving letters at the door
Of the sprightly Elinore:
Had he known Braithwaite's *Anthology*
He had needed no apology;
All the constellations show it —
Elinore will be a poet!"

My companions had allowed me to go on talking. The afternoon was getting late, and we must soon leave. The continued silence of my friends impelled me to speak again. The imminence of separation prompted my thoughts. "Here in this grove I am happy in having realized a wonderful fulfilment," I said. "Voicing

that fulfilment is a part of our message in bidding farewell to this place. Though we separate, we do not go our ways: we are still together in the thought and acceptance of the great future for the art of poetry in this country. It has been a part of our consciousness during all these happy summer and autumn weeks. As we discussed this book and that, across our minds there flitted the figures and names of a fine company. We knew that they were, at the very moment we sat here under these trees, with the sounds of the happy summer making a musical accompaniment to our thoughts and words — that these creators of beautiful moods and images, were building us newer glories in verse. The highest level of truth and beauty in America; the authentic spirit of our profoundest human experience, was flowing from the souls of these men and women. Have we not a right to anticipate their gifts with exultation? Think of this great reservoir of dreams and imagination, of aspiration and vision, of truth and beauty. And let me say, you, my friends, will not be true to the spirit of this grove, to our happy companionship here, unless during the coming months you —"

"Do you doubt that we will not?" Psyche interrupted with perfect understanding of my thought.

"I promise to do more," Jason agreed. "In my wanderings I will carry the message of their work. The memory of this place will be a sufficient urge, whatever my inclinations may be."

"My help," said Cassandra, "will be modest but sincere."

"Then," I exclaimed, "our experience has been profitable. Now, shall we go?"

"Must we?" asked Psyche.

No one would answer that question for the moment. But instinctively we all arose. Where the sunlight filtered through the branches, there was a soft mellow veil. I don't know whether a haze was actually visible in the clearings through the woods, but I am sure we felt it; or, perhaps, it was only the mood which the moment brought. The reluctance to leave the place, made us unconscious that we were leaving it. It was not until we had almost reached the road, that Psyche looked back, and made us realize that our pine was hidden from sight.

"Saying good-bye," she remarked, "is but the symbol of a brief interval of time that takes place in our lives. Here, will the snows lie deep in a few short weeks. But there will be warmth underneath. Absence is but a current of electricity making a void in the air; the waves of air part but to meet. The thunder of our greeting will be terrifically happy. Can we doubt that the Spring is far behind? And our grove will be here, to be our temple again, in which to worship our American poets."

"And Laurel Farm the hospital place of rest and dreams?" I asked.

"Yes," Psyche replied. "I would like to think it was so."

THE END

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